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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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India in soup: US says RAW agent planned to kill Pannun

US claims link between Pannun murder plot, Nijjar's death

WASHINGTON, 18 OCT

An Indian RAW official was involved in a plot to kill a separatist Sikh American national last summer, federal prosecutors alleged on Thursday in a damaging indictment filed in a US court in New York.

The official Vikash Yadav, 39, was employed by the Cabinet Secretariat, which houses India's foreign intelligence service, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), the federal prosecutors claimed.

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has added Vikash to their 'most-wanted' list. Yadav, who is allegedly no longer a government employee, has been charged with three counts, including murder-for-hire and conspiracy to commit money laundering.

He "remains at large", the Department of Justice said.

His co-conspirator Nikhil Gupta was arrested in Czechoslovakia last year and is languishing in a US jail after extradition.

The Indian government has denied its association or involvement. Following allegations by the US, New Delhi had set up an inquiry committee.

Unsealing of the second indictment comes within 48 hours of an Indian Enquiry Committee visiting here to have a meeting with an inter-agency team of officials from the FBI, Department of Justice and the State Department on these issues.

FBI added Vikash Yadav to their 'most-wanted' list **PHOTO: FBI**

The indictment posts a pictures of Yadav in a military dress and also gives a picture of two people exchanging dollars in a car in New York, which federal prosecutors said were the money being paid to the alleged killer by a person on behalf of Gupta and Yadav to assassinate Pannun. The picture is dated 9 June, 2023.

The damaging indictment alleges that Yadav along with his co-conspirator Nikhil plotted to kill the Sikh separatist leader in the summer of 2023. For this Gupta hired an individual to do the kill job. The unidentified individual, who was an informant to the FBI asked for USD 1,00,000 for the job and received USD 15,000 as an advance payment on 9 June, 2023. It was during the same month that President Joe Biden had invited Prime Minister Modi on a historic state visit, which took place on 22 June. According to the indictment, Yadav told Gupta and the hired killer not to do the job immediately before or during the State visit. The indictment reveals that there was a link between the murder of another Sikh separatist Nijjar in Canada during the same period. "A few minutes later, Yadav messaged Gupta, instructing: "let them also verify by their own... if they are able to get some proof that he is inside..it will be a go ahead from us," a reference to giving the green light to assassinate the Victim as soon as it could be verified that he was at his residence," the federal prosecutors alleged. The US said the victim is a vocal critic of the Government of India ssion of Punjab. —*PTI*

>>>More on Pages 3 & 6

China cries foul as Taiwan opens office in Mumbai

Beijing, 19 Oct

China said it lodged a diplomatic protest with India over the newly established office of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Centre (TECC) of Taiwan in Mumbai. Beijing said the one-China principle is a serious political commitment made by the Indian side and serves as the political foundation for China-India relations. The TECC in India opened a branch in Mumbai on Wednesday, bringing the number of its offices in India to three. The TECC previously had its offices in Delhi and Chennai. —*PTI*

SECURITY BEEFED UP

ED raids MUDA office, questions officials for 6 hrs

BENGALURU, 18 OCT

The probe into the MUDA 'scam' allegedly involving Chief Minister Siddaramaiah picked up pace on Friday with Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducting searches in its Mysuru office in a money laundering case linked to irregularities in the allotment of sites.

The MUDA office in Mysuru and some other locations including in Bengaluru were raided by the federal probe agency officials.

The ED officials arrived with over 60 questions, interrogating MUDA staff for more than six hours.

No premises of Chief Minister or his family were covered, they said.

At least 20 CRPF personnel and local police provided security to ED officers at MUDA. Entry to the public was restricted. The main gates of the MUDA office were closed down. The raid began at 10.50 am, in which 12 officials examined files at MUDA office and six at the Taluk Office in Nazarbad mini Vidhana Soudha.

"ED will work here till Saturday," MUDA Secretary Prasanna Kumar said.

Urban Development Minister Suresha BS (Byrathi Suresh) said the MUDA would provide all documents to the ED as sought by it.

Siddaramaiah, his wife, brother-in-law Mallikarjuna Swamy and Devaraju -- from whom Swamy had purchased a land and gifted it to Parvathi -- and others have been named in the FIR registered by Lokayukta police on 27 September.

On 30 September, ED filed an enforcement case information report to book the chief minister and others.

Enforcement Directorate **PHOTO: PTI**

ED officials also conducted searches at Devaraju's residence at Kengeri here, sources said.

During the examination of MUDA officials, ED agents requested all original files related to site allotments, including the controversial report involving the application of whitener submitted by Parvathi.

ED officials sought clarification on various topics, including the relationships between Parvathi, her brother Mallikarjuna and. Devaraj. They also requested copies of MUDA board meeting resolutions that sanctioned alternative sites to the Chief Minister's wife, as well as land denotification files from 1998 and 2010, and documents related to the process initiated by MUDA after Parvathi returned certain sites. The ED officials expressed frustration at the lack of cooperation from MUDA personnel, noting that despite having issued three notices, the officials had failed to respond, including to a final show cause notice. They warned that cases could be filed against those who continued to withhold information regarding MUDA's alleged irregularities. In response, several MUDA officials claimed they were new to their positions, having been transferred to the office only last month. —*Salar News*

>>>More on Page 2

Satyendar Jain walks out of Tihar jail after 2 years

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Senior AAP leader and former Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain walked out of the Tihar Jail Friday evening, hours after a city court granted him bail in a money laundering case.

Delhi chief minister Atishi and senior Aam Aadmi Party leaders, including Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh, received Jain, who was in jail for around two years.

As he came out of the courtroom here after the bail hearing, Jain, a former health minister in the AAP government, said "Satyamev Jayate (truth only triumphs)".

The Rouse Avenue court granted the bail to Jain, who was arrested by ED (ED) in May 2022, citing "delay in trial" and his "long incarceration".

The judge rejected ED's request to deny bail to Jain, saying that the relief granted under Article 21 (right to life and personal liberty) of Constitution will supersede stringent twin conditions of Section 45 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), when "liberty is the core value under consideration".

Satyendar Jain **PHOTO: PTI**

The judge, who also issued a release warrant for Jain, granted the relief on a personal bond of Rs 50,000 with one surety of like amount.

Jain, however, was saddled with a slew of riders, which included cooperating with the investigation and not trying to interfere with the probe. He was directed to appear before the investigating officer and the court whenever required.

"Accused will not contact any witnesses, and will not travel outside India without the court's prior permission," the court ordered.

AAP said in a post on X, "Another conspiracy of BJP failed as Satyendra got bail from the court." —*PTI*

2 missing women: SC junks plea against Isha Foundation

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Amid reports of people missing from the premises of spiritual leader Jaggi Vasudev's Isha Foundation in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, Supreme Court closed the proceedings in a habeas corpus petition, on Friday.

The petition was filed by a man who had alleged that his two daughters were held captive on the premises. A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud noted that the sisters -- aged 39 and 42 -- are adults and have stated that they are residing at the ashram voluntarily and without any coercion.

A habeas corpus petition is filed seeking direction to produce before the court a person who is missing or has been illegally detained.

"Both the individuals have attained the age of majority. They were majors even when they joined the ashram. They have expressed their clear inclination to continue at the Isha Foundation at Coimbatore," said the bench, also comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra. The counsel said the reason why the father had filed a habeas corpus petition in the high court was that his daughter had made a call to him that she was on fast unto death.

Jaggi Vasudev **PHOTO: PTI**

"There is nothing that we can do about it because she is a major," the bench said.

The grievances of the petitioner before the High Court was that the Foundation was abusing certain persons by brainwashing and converting them into monks and not even allowing their parents and relatives to meet them. —*PTI*

Omar passes resolution to restore J&K statehood

SRINAGAR, 18 OCT

In its first Cabinet meeting on Thursday, the Omar Abdullah-led government passed a resolution calling on the Central government to reinstate Jammu and Kashmir's statehood for.

In its first Cabinet meeting on Thursday, the Omar Abdullah-led government passed a resolution calling on the Central government to reinstate Jammu and Kashmir's statehood for.

NC, which secured 42 seats in the recent Assembly elections, prepared the draft resolution, which Chief Minister Omar Abdullah is expected to personally deliver to Prime Minister Narendra Modi during an upcoming visit to New Delhi. PDP criticised the resolution and said that it prioritises statehood over the restoration of Article 370. The Opposition called it a "huge setback" that essentially ratifies the Centre's 2019 decisions. PDP Youth President Waheed Parra stated that this undermines the promise made during elections. Similarly, People's Conference Chief Sajad Lone questioned the secrecy surrounding the Cabinet's resolution, emphasising that such important issues should be addressed in the Assembly, not the Cabinet, which he described as a majoritarian body. Lone questioned if BJP would vote on restoration statehood and Article 370 if presented the resolution was submitted in the Assembly. —*PTI*

SAINI'S 1ST PROMISE

Haryana to offer free dialysis to kidney patients

CHANDIGARH, 18 OCT

Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Friday announced all government hospitals in Haryana will offer free dialysis to chronic kidney patients, fulfilling the ruling BJP's first poll promise.

Addressing a press conference after presiding over the firs t meeting of his cabinet, the chief minister said his government will also implement the Supreme Court's decision empowering states to make sub-classifications within the Scheduled Castes for granting reservation "today itself".

Saini, who was sworn in as Chief Minister for a second time on Thursday, said the people of Haryana defeated Congress' narrative of lies and efforts to provoke farmers and the poor by bringing BJP back to power for a third time.

By giving a big mandate to BJP, people put their stamp of approval on the policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said.

He said all government hospitals in the state will start offering free dialysis to chronic kidney patients. "The first file that I signed (after assuming charge) was regarding the decision on kidney patients. The cost of dialysis is nearly Rs 20,000 to Rs 25,000 per month," he said. —*PTI*

EX-CJI RAMANA'S JUDGEMENT

SC recalls verdict striking down benami law

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

In a significant development, Supreme Court on Friday recalled its 2022 verdict that had declared as unconstitutional two provisions of the law on prohibition of benami property transactions that restrains such deals and acquisition of properties by authorities.

Allowing the Centre's review of 23 August, 2022 verdict, a bench Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud, Justices PS Narasimha and Manoj Misra recalled the judgement delivered by a three-judge bench headed by former CJI NV Ramana.

In its August 2022 verdict, the top court had then held that Sections 3(2) and 5 of the Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act, 1988 being "manifestly arbitrary" were unconstitutional.

In its August 2022 verdict, the apex court had held that benami law did not have a retrospective application **PHOTO: PTI**

While Section 3 of the Act deals with prohibition of benami (a property held by a person through proxies) transactions, Section 5 pertains to property of benami liable to acquisition¬.

On Friday, the top court agreed with the submissions of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who appeared for the Centre, that the validity of these two provisions were not under challenge before the erstwhile bench.

In its August 2022 verdict, the apex court had held that benami law did not have a retrospective application and the authorities couldn't initiate or continue criminal prosecution or confiscation proceedings for transactions entered into prior to when the legislation came into force.

The benami law was enacted to prohibit such transactions and enforce the right to recover properties held to be "benami". The law punishes a violator with a three-year jail term or fine or both. —*PTI*

Modi to visit Russia next week to attend BRICS meet

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping are set to come face-to-face at the BRICS summit in the Russian city of Kazan next week as both leaders are attending the conclave. Modi will pay a two-day visit to Kazan beginning Tuesday to attend the BRICS summit following an invitation by Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Friday. There have been speculations about the possibility of a meeting between the two leaders on the margins of the BRICS summit in Kazan. However, there is no official word on it yet from India or China. Indian and Chinese troops have been locked in a bitter standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh for over four years. It is expected that Modi will hold a bilateral meeting with Putin during which both the leaders are expected to deliberate on the conflict in Ukraine. —*PTI*

India sends humanitarian aid to Lebanon

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

New Delhi, Oct 18 India on Friday sent 33 tonnes of humanitarian supplies, including medicines, to Lebanon. The supply of aid came amid Israel's continuing military offensive targeting Hezbollah strongholds. The consignment comprises of a wide range of pharmaceutical products, including cardiovascular medications, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, anti-inflammatory agents, antibiotics and anaesthetics.—*PTI*

PFI planned to start civil war in India: ED

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday said the Popular Front of India (PFI), a proscribed terrorist organisation, was working to create an Islamic movement in India through a "jihad" that included non-violent air raids and "guerilla theatre", apart from various methods of cruelty and subjugation. ED said it attached assets worth Rs 35 crore that are "owned and controlled" by. PFI was banned by the Centre in 2022 after ED and NIA carried out countrywide raids the party. —*PTI*

Bullet-riddled body of Bihar worker found in J&K

SRINAGAR, 18 OCT

A bullet-riddled body of a labourer hailing from Bihar was on Friday recovered in Jammu and Kashmir's Shopian district, officials said. The body was recovered from Wachi area of Zainapora in the south Kashmir district, they said. The labourer identified as Ashok Chauhan was living in Sangam area of Anantnag. One of Chauhan's colleagues told PTI Videos they left their rented room at 7 in the morning and he was with them for about an hour. "He got a phone call while we were harvesting corn. He told us that he is going somewhere. When he did not return for sometime, we went to look for him. We called his number which kept ringing, but there was no answer. Then we found his body," the colleague added. The body has been taken to a hospital.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Belagavi woman kills spouse with 2 aides, all held

BELAGAVI, 18 OCT

Belagavi city police have arrested a woman who, along with her two accomplices, had allegedly murdered her husband. The police arrested Uma Padmannanavar, 42, late Thursday night based on a complaint by her daughter Sanjana, 18, who had suspected that her father Santosh Padmannanavar, 47, was killed and did not die of a heart attack as narrated by her mother. Based on her complaint, Malmaruti police registered a case and exhumed the body. While the police awaited the forensic report, the interrogation of Uma revealed that she, along with her two accomplices, Shobhit Gowda and Pavan, committed the crime. The CCTV footages obtained from the neighbour's house showed two people entering their house, sources said. *—PTI*

HDK promises to set up industries in Mandya

MYSURU, 18 OCT'

The two day job mela organised under 'Mandya to India' initivative by Union Minister of steels and heavy industries HD Kumaraswamy that began on Friday received an overwhelming response with a participation of a large number of unemployed youths on the first day of the job fair in Mandya. More than 150 companies including National Minerals Development Corporation of India, Department of Union Ministry of Steels and Heavy Industries, Indian Army, Indian Navy, Bharat Heavy Electricals, Jindal Steels took part. They also offered job offer letters to the selected aspirants on the spot. Government has given priority for job creation opportunities by giving special thrust to the automobile, electric vehicles sector.. *—Salar News*

Teacher360 Spaces initiative launched in City

BENGALURU, 18 OCT

Teacher360 Learning Spaces was officially launched in Bengaluru on Friday, marking a significant step in empowering educators to become thinkers, leaders, and innovators of tomorrow. The program me seeks to revolutionise education by equipping teachers with the knowledge, skills, and vision to transform not just classrooms but the very fabric of society. The initiative is led by the Doyen of education – G Balasubramanian, former CBSE Director (Academics). Teacher360 is a movement focused on empowering educators to lead transformative change in education, creating a lasting impact on the future of learning. *—Salar News*

Mysuru prepares for Kannada Rajyotsava

MYSURU, 18 OCT

Additional deputy commissioner P Shivaraju on Friday said that district administration has taken all measures for Kannada Rajyotsava celebrations meaningfully this year too on 1 November at Oval grounds in Mysuru. Chairing the preliminary meeting to discuss the preparations for the Kananda festival held at his office he said that district in charge Minister Dr HC Mahadevappa will kick off the celebrations by hoisting the Kananda Flag, pay floral tributes to Goddess Bhuvaneshwari at Oval grounds in the city on the same day at 9 am. A procession following the various folk dances including dolluk, kamsale, nagari, puja kunitha will be taken out after offering puja at Bhuvaneshwari temple in the Palace premises. During the event, prizes will be given to top scorers in exams. *—Salar News*

Oppn BJP, JD(S) welcome ED raids in MUDA 'scam'

HDK says fair probe in case was not possible by Lokayukta

BENGALURU, 18 OCT

PHOTO: PTI

- Leaders from the two parties slammed the ruling Congress for questioning ED probe in the case, in which Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is an accused

Welcoming the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) raids in the MUDA site allotment case allegedly involving Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's family, Opposition BJP and JD(S) in Karnataka asserted on Friday that they are necessary to uncover the 'scam' and to bring out the truth.

Leaders from the two parties slammed the ruling Congress for questioning ED probe in the case, in which Siddaramaiah is an accused, asking whether a fair probe into the case was possible by Lokayukta police that function under his government.

Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly R Ashoka denied suggestions of political motive behind the raids, noting that the complaint against the CM and others was not filed by his party.

"It is said Rs 3,000-4,000 crore illegality has happened, if that amount comes back, it will help the government. They (Congress) should welcome the raid and cooperate to ensure that the amount is recovered," he said, adding, those who question ED probe should go to court.

"Why is Siddaramaiah waiting without going to court? Instead of questioning it in the court, they are saying ED doesn't have powers to probe the case. Do you (Cong govt) have the right -- You are forming SITs (Special Investigation Teams) in Karnataka every day (to probe cases involving opposition leaders)? Have we questioned you? We are saying -- probe the cases. Don't politicise probes," Ashoka said.

Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council Chalavadi Narayanaswamy demanded that Siddaramaiah and Urban Development Minister Byrathi Suresh (under whose department MUDA comes) should resign immediately and cooperate with the probe, "for the truth to come out."

If the Chief Minister doesn't quit, the ED should immediately arrest him, Narayanaswamy said.

Terming MUDA case as "worst scam" by usurping government land, Union Minister and JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy said a fair probe in the case was not possible from Lokayukta police, who work under the State government. " Let's see what comes out from the ED probe." *—PTI*

'MUDA complaint not to target CM but corruption'

MYSURU, 18 OCT

RTI activist Snehamayi Krishna expressed confidence in receiving justice following Enforcement Directorate's (ED) raids on Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) office. The raid, which took place on Friday, was conducted in response to a complaint Krishna.

According to Krishna, the ED officials also targeted the Tahsildar office as part of their investigation into alleged large-scale irregularities within MUDA.

"I believe the truth will emerge from this investigation," Krishna stated. He clarified that his complaint was not aimed at targeting Chief Minister Siddaramaiah or his family, but rather focused on broader corruption issues involving influential politicians across multiple parties.

Krishna on recent resignation of MUDA Chairman K Marigowda, said, "I do not have any information regarding reasons behind his resignation." *—Salar News*

'NOT INTERFERING'

Kidnap case: SC upholds Bhavani's anticipatory bail

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Bhavani Revanna PHOTO: FB

- Bhavani is accused of trying to prevent the survivor, who was allegedly sexually assaulted by her son, from filing a complaint

Supreme Court on Friday refused to set aside the anticipatory bail given to Bhavani Revanna, the mother of suspended JD(S) leader and rape accused Prajwal Revanna, in a kidnapping case while dismissing the Karnataka government's plea.

In a setback to the Karnataka government, a bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan took into account that the chargesheet had been filed in the case and refused to interfere with Karnataka High Court order.

During the hearing, the State government counsel, claimed the mother was directly involved in allegedly procuring women for her son.

The court noted that there was no case to be interfered and the principal accused in had been arrested and put under custodial interrogation.

The High Court had on 18 June granted anticipatory bail to Bhavani emphasising she had already answered 85 questions during the investigation, making it unfair to claim she was not cooperating with the special investigation team (SIT) probing the alleged sexual abuse cases against her son.

High Court while granting the pre-arrest bail said media trials should be avoided and highlighted the State's allegations of non-cooperation were unconvincing since Bhavani had already provided extensive responses during her interrogation.

On 7 June, with reprieve the High Court prevented Bhavani from entering Mysuru and Hassan districts while extending embargo on 14 June.

Bhavani is accused of trying to prevent the survivor, who was allegedly sexually assaulted by her son, from filing a complaint. *—PTI*

Union Minister Pralhad's brother, nephew booked in cheating case

BENGALURU, 18 OCT

Bengaluru police have filed an FIR against Union Minister Pralhad Joshi's brother based on a complaint of cheating lodged by a former JD(S) MLA's wife.

The Minister clarified he had separated himself from his brother Gopal Joshi more than three decades, and said he had filed an affidavit in the court and also published a public notice saying that anyone claiming to be his brother, relatives or friends and indulging in any financial business will not be a binding on him.

Gopal Joshi and a woman named Vijayalakshmi Joshi were booked by Basaveshwaranagar police. Gopal's son Ajay Joshi has also been named in the FIR, police sources said on Friday.

The complaint was filed by Sunita Chavan, wife of former Nagthana MLA Devavand Phool Singh Chavan, who lost the 2023 Assembly election.

Vijayalakshmi was introduced to her as Pralhad Joshi's sister, the complainant alleged, but the Minister clarified that he has no sister as they were four brothers, one of whom died in 1984 in a road accident in Maharashtra's Ahmednagar.

When the family did not get a ticket, Sunita alleged, she again approached Gopal, who told her that he was about to get a Rs 200 crore project and he would return her amount. He asked her to pay him Rs 1.75 crore, which she did, the complainant alleged.

Bengaluru Police Commissioner B Dayananda told reporters here: "It appears Rs 2 crore was given in various instalments, which is also under investigation."

Speaking to reporters in New Delhi, the Union Minister also read out a portion from his affidavit in the Original Suit Number 8477/2023.

"I and the said Gopal V Joshi have separated since more than 20 years. In this connection we have executed a family arraignment deed or Vaivastha Patra on March 17, 2012," the affidavit read. *—PTI*

UNITED WE STAND

Activists of Veerashaiva Lingayat Samnaviya Samiti and progressive activists protested against condemning the killing of Prof MM Kalburgi and journalist Gauri Lankesh, at Chalukya Circle, in Bengaluru, on Friday. Activists, including MT Subhashchandra, Kavitha Lankesh, BR Patil, BT Lalitha were detained and taken to Vidhana Soudha Police Station PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with DyCM DK Shivakumar, Jayamruthyunjaya swamy and others during a meeting on inclusion of Panchamashali quota, in Bengaluru on Friday PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

CM: Decision on Panchamasali community quota as per law

BENGALURU, 18 OCT

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said a decision on the demand for higher reservation for Panchamasali Lingayat community in government jobs and educational institutions, will be taken in accordance with the law and the spirit of the Constitution.

He said the government has an open mind on the issue of reservation.

"Our government stands for social justice, and it is our stance that justice should be available to all marginalized groups," he said during a meeting with a delegation led by Kudalasangama Panchamasali Peeth Seer Basava Jaya Mruthyunjaya Swami, who sought enhanced quota for the community.

The Panchamasali Lingayat community wants to be included in category 2A (15 per cent) of OBC reservation matrix. They are currently included under 3B (5 per cent), according to its leaders.

Panchamasali Lingayats, a sub-sect of the dominant Veerashaiva-Lingayat community, had earlier held protests and demonstrations, to press for their demand.

"Actions will be taken in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution. Any decisions made will be carried out honestly according to the law," the CM was quoted as saying by his office.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said that, "Our government believes in justice for all communities. The reservation issue is in court and the government can't intervene at this juncture. We will hold discussions with Panchamasalis in the days to come,"

Siddaramaiah also pointed out that the election code of conduct is currently in effect, but a meeting with community leaders has been held as per prior arrangements. *—PTI*

AP CONSTRUCTION WORKER KILLS WIFE, MAN IN CITY

BENGALURU, 18 OCT

A labourer from Andhra Pradesh allegedly killed his wife and another man before hanging himself at a building under con-struction at Konanakunte here, police sources said on Friday. "Pulusu Golla allegedly killed his 33-year-old wife Lakshmi Golla and another person named Ganesh Kumar, 20, with a log suspecting her fidelity on Thursday," a police official said. The 35-year-old then hanged himself, the sources said. The three construction workers hailed from Andhra Pradesh. *—PTI*

Oppn MPs threatened panel at Waqf meet: Tejasvi Surya

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

BJP leader Tejasvi Surya has written to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla alleging some opposition members threatened Jagadambika Pal, the chairperson of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Waqf Amendment Bill, and a witness during a sitting of the panel, and also tore up documents.

Surya, a two-term MP from Bengaluru South, claimed the Opposition members resorted to unparliamentary behaviour on 14 October, when the Committee had called former Karnataka State Minorities Commission chairman Anwar Manipaddy to hear his views on the Waqf land "scam".

BJP leader's missive to the Speaker came days after the Opposition members' letter to the Lok Sabha presiding officer alleging "gross violation of parliamentary code of conduct" by Pal.

In his letter to Birla, Surya said, "During his deposition, Shri Manippadi discussed a report he submitted in 2012 during his tenure. This report alleges large-scale encroachment or sale of approximately 2,000 acres of Waqf land, valued at around Rs. 2 lakh crore, to private entities, implicating certain leaders of Congress."

Surya claimed that as soon as this issue was brought to the Committee's attention, opposition members disrupted the proceedings, verbally threatened both the witness and the chairperson, and tore up committee documents.

Surya asked the Speaker to direct the Opposition members to adhere to the Rules of Conduct and Parliamentary Etiquette, and initiate disciplinary action against those responsible. *—PTI*

UDTA BENGALURU?

₹21 cr drugs seized from foreign parcel office

BENGALURU, 18 OCT

CCB Narcotics Unit along with Customs officials during a search operation in India post's foreign unit, in Bengaluru PHOTO: X

Anti-Narcotics Wing of the Central Crime Branch (CCB), Bengaluru Customs officials, seized drugs worth Rs 21.17 crore packed in 606 packages at India Post's foreign parcel office on Thursday, said Bengaluru Police Commissioner P Dayananda.

The prohibited substances were smuggled from the United States, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Thailand and the Netherlands.

The operation, which involved sniffer dogs of the City Police, resulted in the inspection of 3,500 undelivered parcels flagged as suspicious. Out of these, 606 packages were found to contain illegal narcotics such as hydro ganja, ganja oil, LSD, MDMA crystals, ecstasy tablets, heroin, cocaine, amphetamine, charas.

The canine squad played a key role in identifying the contraband, enabling the authorities to intercept the parcels before they could be delivered. Authorities have stated that further investigations are still underway.

Meanwhile, VV Puram police has arrested an interstate individual involved in sending hoax bomb threat emails to schools and colleges across the City. The investigation led to the recovery of a laptop and mobile phone used in the crime, pertaining to 10 similar cases reported in various police stations over a period of 2 months.

4 held for using fake driver IDs on Porter app

CEN Police Station, South Division, has apprehended four people involved in creating fake customer and driver IDs on the Porter app.

Using these IDs, they manipulated the system by selecting fake drivers and placing fake orders. The company paid the fake drivers, and after the orders were canceled, refunds were issued to the fake customers. Over the past 8 months, they defrauded the company of 90 lakh. The investigation is still underway. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

Shivaji statue collapse: Fabricator arrested in UP

MUMBAI, 18 OCT

Police has arrested a fabricator of the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj that recently collapsed at a fort in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg district, triggering a huge political row, an official said on Friday. Fabricator Parmeshwar Ramnaresh Yadav, who was arrested from Uttar Pradesh, had used substandard material while shaping the 35-foot-tall statue of the Maratha warrior king. A resident of Mirzapur in UP, Yadav was taken into custody on Thursday after his role in the statue collapse came to light, the official said. After his role was established, an FIR was filed against him. *—PTI*

10 RSS workers hurt after attack at religious event

JAIPUR, 18 OCT

Ten RSS workers were injured in Jaipur's Karni Vihar after being attacked with "knives and other weapons" during a Sharad Purnima event at a temple on Thursday night. Police said the incident happened when a 'jagran' programme was underway at the temple. It is said that the residents objected to the noise and crowd in their neighbourhood at late hours. A police official said two of the residents arrived at the venue when 'kheer' was being distributed among devotees. After an altercation, they called in more people from their group and attacked the RSS workers, leaving 10 of them injured. Rajasthan Cabinet Minister Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore visited the injured at the SMS Hospital and said strict action would be taken against those involved. Rathore also emphasised that a thorough investigation would follow, ensuring accountability. Police have detained two suspects, Naseeb Chaudhary and his son. *—PTI*

NC's Gul is pro-tem Speaker of J&K Assembly

SRINAGAR, 18 OCT

Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha has appointed National Conference MLA Mubarak Gul as the pro-tem Speaker of the new legislative assembly. Mubarak Gul, who won the Idgah seat in Srinagar for the sixth time, will administer the oath to the newly elected members on Monday, according to an order from the J&K Legislative Assembly Secretariat. The appointment, made under Section 24 of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, designates Gul as the pro-tem speaker before whom all members will take their oath or affirmation. The ceremony is scheduled for 21 October in Srinagar. All the members were requested to attend the Legislative Assembly session. *—PTI*

Activist Sonam Wangchuk's fast enters 13th day

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk's fast demanding Ladakh's inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution entered 13th day on Friday. They were detained by Delhi Police at the Singhu border on 30 September and released on 2 October. Wangchuk began an indefinite hunger strike at Delhi's Ladakh Bhawan on 6 October, demanding a meeting with Prime Minister Modi on the Ladakh issue. Meanwhile, on Thursday, the All-India Kishan Sabha (AIKS) extended solidarity. He called upon people to observe a day-long fast with him and vow to give up consumerism. "Many say we are here to support you, but I want to tell them that do not come in our support, or to support Ladakh, come here to support your own future," he said. *—PTI*

No issue in MVA over seat deal: Uddhav

Raut claims Congress is not capable of taking decisions; Patole says stalemate in MVA over seats

MUMBAI, 18 OCT

Amid an impasse over seat-sharing among Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) parties in poll-bound Maharashtra, Shiv Sena (UBT) President Uddhav Thackeray on Friday cautioned that haggling among allies, particularly the Congress, must not be allowed to reach a breaking point.

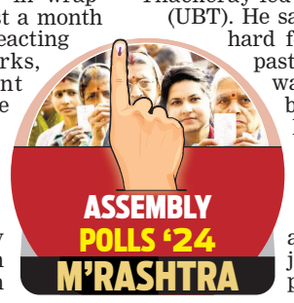
Addressing a press conference, the Sena (UBT) chief maintained he has not heard from his party leaders involved in seat-sharing talks with other MVA constituents that there was any major issue in clinching a deal for the 20 November elections to the 288-member Assembly.

Seat-sharing talks among partners in the opposition alliance -- the Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP) -- were in final stages and a deal could be sealed by Saturday or in the next 2 to 3 days, Thackeray emphasised.

"Haggling among allies must not be allowed to reach a breaking point," the former CM cautioned as talks among MVA parties for allocation of seats dragged on.

Thackeray asserted the political scenario in Maharashtra has changed and people have decided to bring the opposition MVA to power. Meanwhile, Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Raut claimed state Congress leaders were not capable of taking decisions on distribution of Assembly constituencies and sought to instil a sense of urgency in wrapping up talks as just a month is left for voting. Reacting to Raut's remarks, MPCC President Patole noted there was a stalemate in the MVA over 25 to 30 Assembly seats, and maintained the party's state unit will abide by any decision its high command takes on the matter.

Maharashtra CM Eknath Shinde's MP son Shrikant Shinde courted controversy after he entered the sanctum sanctorum of the Mahakaleshwar temple in Madhya Pradesh's despite a ban, prompting probe PHOTO: PTI



BJP leader joins Sena (UBT)

Rajan Teli, a BJP leader from coastel district Sindhudurg district, has resigned from the party's and joined the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT). He said he worked hard for BJP in the past 10 years but was facing troubles particularly after Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg Lok Sabha MP Narayan Rane and his family joined the party *—PTI*

NAMES OF MVA VOTERS REMOVED: OPPN LEADERS

MUMBAI, 18 OCT

Leaders from the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) on Friday alleged that names of voters leaning towards the opposition parties were being removed from the electoral rolls for the upcoming Maharashtra elections. The leaders, especially Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole, demanded the removal of state Director General of Police Rashmi Shukla to ensure free and fair polls.

Patole alleged that the ECI's form no 7, meant to delete names from the voters list, is being used to remove the names of voters and Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis were behind it. "Names of voters leaning towards the Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP) are being removed from the voters list. This is being done because BJP is losing polls," Patole said. *—PTI*

Dharavi project world's biggest scam, MVA will scrap it: Gaikwad

Mumbai Congress President Varsha Gaikwad on Friday termed the Dharavi slum redevelopment project as the "world's biggest land scam", and said the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) will scrap it if it returns to power in the state. She also said the political rivalry between Congress and the undivided Shiv Sena was a thing of the past and now her party and the Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena (UBT) share a "deep and harmonious" relationship. *—PTI*

Man distributes gifts in Nanded district, booked for poll bribery

An unidentified person was booked in Maharashtra's Nanded district for allegedly distributing gifts amid the model code of conduct for the 20 November Assembly polls, an official said on Friday. The incident took place on 15 October and the accused has been charged under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita for bribery in elections, disobeying orders of public servant and other offences, the Kandhar police station official said. Results of the Maharashtra assembly polls will be declared on 23 November. *—PTI*

JHARKHAND POLLS

AJSU to contest 10 seats, JD(U) 2, LJP 1

RANCHI, 18 OCT

BJP on Friday said it will contest the upcoming Assembly polls in Jharkhand in alliance with AJSU Party, JD(U) and LJP (Ram Vilas).

Under the arrangement, the saffron party will contest 68 seats, AJSU Party 10, JD(U) 2 and LJP (Ram Vilas) 1, though a final decision will be made soon.

Elections to the 81-member Jharkhand Assembly will be held in two phases, on 13 November and 20 November, with the counting of votes scheduled for 23 November.

Briefing reporters here, Assam Chief Minister **Himanta Biswa Sarma**, also the BJP's co-in-charge for Jharkhand Assembly elections, said National Democratic Alliance (NDA) constituents All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU) Party will contest 10 seats, Janata Dal (United) two and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) one. Sarma said while the seat-sharing arrangement is nearly finalised, the BJP is adopting a "wait and watch" strategy as rival parties, including the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, are yet to disclose their plans.

Sarma said, "NDA allies AJSU Party will contest 10 seats, JD(U) 2, and LJP (Ram Vilas) 1 in Jharkhand as per the seat-sharing arrangement, which is almost finalised."

PHOTO: PTI

AJSU Party will contest from Silli, Ramgarh, Gomia, Ichagarh, Mandu, Jugsalai, Dumri, Pakur, Lohardaga, and Manoharpur. JD(U) will field candidates in Jamshedpur West and Tamar, while LJP (Ram Vilas) will contest from Chatra, he said.

Sarma made the remarks in the presence of Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and AJSU Party chief Sudesh Mahto.

Chouhan said the central leadership has decided the NDA will jointly contest the elections in the state to "save the identity of Jharkhand and to protect 'Mati, Beti, and Roti' (land, daughter, and bread)." *—PTI*

Stalin condemns celebration of Hindi month, writes to Modi

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Friday raised concerns over linguistic diversity and representation and strongly condemned the celebration of Hindi Month valedictory function along with the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Chennai Doordarshan.

"I strongly condemn the celebration of Hindi Month valedictory function along with the Golden Jubilee celebrations of Chennai Doordarshan. Hon'ble @PMOIndia, The Constitution of India does not grant national language status to any language. In a multilingual nation, celebrating Hindi Month in non-Hindi-speaking states is seen as an attempt to belittle other languages. Therefore, I suggest that holding such Hindi-oriented events in non-Hindi-speaking states could be avoided, and instead, the celebration of the local language month in the respective states should be encouraged," Stalin posted on X.

MK Stalin PHOTO: PTI

He also wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasising that the Indian Constitution does not grant national language status to any language, and Hindi and English are only for official purposes. He suggests avoiding Hindi language programs in non-Hindi-speaking states.

He stated that in a multilingual country like India, celebrating the Hindi month in non-Hindi-speaking states was seen as an attempt to belittle the other languages.

Stalin suggested that the Hindi language-oriented events could be avoided in the non-Hindi speaking states if possible or if allowed the celebration of the local language should also take place in respective states with equal warmth. "If the Union goverment still wants to conduct such events they can simultaneously celebrate local language months to promote harmony among languages," Stalin suggested. *—ANI*

UCC Head submits final report to Uttarakhand CM

DEHRADUN, 18 OCT

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Chairman Shatrughan Singh submitted the final report to the Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami at the state secretariat on Friday here.

Dhami said that the first decision the government wanted to take after forming the government was that of UCC. He said that the committee was formed under the leadership of Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai and the report was submitted after which the bill was passed in the Legislative Assembly on 7 February, 2024. Dhami mentioned that UCC manual consisted of four sections and a mobile app was also designed for people to address their queries online. *—PTI*

MURMU IN MALAWI

President Droupadi Murmu pays homage at the National War Memorial, in Lilongwe, Malawi on Friday PHOTO: PTI

Baba murder: 5 held after raids; arrests rise to 9

MUMBAI, 18 OCT

Five more people were held on Friday in connection with the murder of NCP leader Baba Siddique, taking the total number of arrests in the sensational case to nine, a Mumbai police official said.

The arrested peopel were also in touch with the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, which is accused of gunning down Siddique. Siddique was shot at and grievously injured on 12 October near his MLA son Zeeshan Siddique's office in Nirmal Nagar in Mumbai's Bandra area. He died some time later in nearby Lilavati Hospital.

The four persons arrested earlier include two alleged shooters who were overpowered by police and passersby at the spot itself. *—PTI*

₹5CR FOR SALMAN: TRAFFIC COPS GET THREAT

The Mumbai traffic police received a threat message demanding Rs 5 crore from Bollywood actor Salman Khan, following which the Crime Branch began a probe, an official said on Friday. He had earlier received death threats from the Lawrence Bishnoi gang. Due to these threats, Salman's security is reportedly travelling exclusively in his bulletproof SUV for safety. *—PTI*

NDA committed to empowering poor: PM

CHANDIGARH, 18 OCT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance is committed to furthering national progress and empowering the poor and downtrodden, as he chaired a meeting of the ruling bloc's chief ministers.

The NDA Chief Ministers' Council Meeting -- attended by 17 CMs and 18 Deputy CMs -- was held at a five-star hotel here following the swearing-in ceremony of Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini and his council at Panchkula.

"We had extensive discussions on aspects of good governance and ways to improve people's lives. Our alliance is committed to furthering national progress and empowering the poor and downtrodden," Modi posted on X. This was the first conclave of NDA chief ministers in the past many years. Union Ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah and JP Nadda, who is also the BJP president, were part of the deliberations. "The NDA pledged to intensify its momentum in building a Viksit Bharat envisioned by Modi Ji and further strengthen service to the poor, farmers, women, and youth," Shah posted on X. *—PTI*

PM to launch Nat'l Learning Week today

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the 'Karmayogi Saptah'-- National Learning Week (NLW) on Saturday, with the exercise seeking to impart fresh impetus towards individual and organisational capacity development for civil servants, his office said. NLW aims to create a "One Government" message, align everyone with national goals. a statement said. *—PTI*

Assam Rifles stopped convoy: Mizoram Minister

AIZAWL, 18 OCT

Mizoram Opposition MLAs and a student body on Friday blamed the Assam Rifles for allegedly stopping a minister's car and convoy during routine checking near Aizawl on Friday.

State Power and Electricity Minister F Rodingliana claimed that his car and carcade were stopped by personnel of the Assam Rifles on the outskirts of Aizawl, while he was returning home from Champhai on Thursday.

The Assam Rifles denied the allegation, maintaining that it halted on its own despite giving clear passage.

The legislature party of the main opposition, Mizo National Front (MNF), said in a statement that Assam Rifles troopers "misbehaved" with the minister, who had been disturbed and delayed for a long time on his way back home after executing his official duty.

"The MNF legislature party strongly blames the paramilitary force for its mischievous act and regards the incident as an insult to the Mizo community and democracy," it said.

The Opposition MLAs also urged the state government to fulfil its responsibilities in protecting the Mizo community and democracy. Lone Congress legislator C Ngunlianchunga and party president Lal Thanzara also blamed the Assam Rifles and termed the incident "unfortunate. They however on Friday demanded that the matter be investigated. *—PTI*

GROWING CONFLICT

India, Canada tensions affect Sikhs: NAPA

CHANDIGARH, 18 OCT

The recent diplomatic tensions between India and Canada, particularly surrounding the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, have had profound implications for the Sikh diaspora, the North American Punjabi Association (NAPA) said on Friday.

This incident has intensified existing insecurities and divisions within the community, affecting how Sikh immigrant families navigate their identities, political beliefs, and social interactions, said Satnam Singh Chahal, NAPA's Executive Director. Nijjar was gunned down in Surrey, British Columbia, in June last year. Following the incident, some view Canada's stance as a legitimate defense of human rights, while others see it as an affront to India's sovereignty, he said. This polarisation can create rifts in families and social circles, leading to heated discussions and estrangement, he said.

Many Sikhs grapple with their dual identity as both Canadians and members of a historically marginalised group PHOTO: X

Ordinary families may worry about being targeted for their views, leading to a chilling effect on free expression within the community, Chahal said. He said Sikh families may navigate complex relationships with non-Sikh neighbours and friends.

Chahal said many Sikhs are grappling with their dual identity as both Canadians and members of a historically marginalised group.

This struggle is compounded by external pressures and negative stereotypes that can arise from incidents like Nijjar's killing, which may overshadow their contributions to Canadian society, he said. He further said that within the diaspora, there can be significant pressure to take sides in the political narrative. *—PTI*

Personal laws can't allow child marriages: SC

SC says Prohibition of Child Marriage Act can't be stuned by traditions as it violates child's will

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Supreme Court on Friday said the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act cannot be stunted by traditions under any personal law and observed marriages involving children violate the free will to choose a life partner.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra further issued a slew of guidelines for the effective implementation of the law on prevention of child marriages in the country.

The bench, however, noted the issue whether the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) would prevail over personal laws was pending with the Parliament for consideration. The Centre had urged the apex court to hold the PCMA to prevail over personal laws.

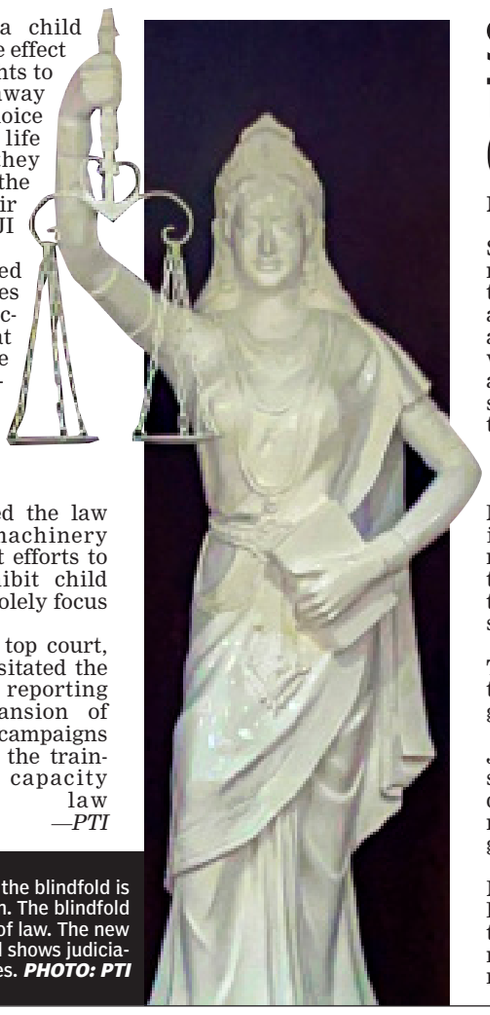
The CJI highlighted that a "very extensive" sociological analysis was made in the judgement.

"While the PCMA seeks to prohibit child marriages. It does not stipulate big social malaise of marriages fixed in the minority of a child which also have the effect of violating the rights to choice...It takes away from them, their choice of partner and life paths before they mature and form the ability to assert their agency...," the CJI said.

The court noted that child marriages require an intersectional approach that acknowledges the overlapping vulnerabilities experienced by children, especially girls, from marginalised communities.

Further, it opined the law enforcement machinery ought to make best efforts to prevent and prohibit child marriage and not solely focus on prosecution.

According to the top court, the scenario necessitated the enhancement of reporting mechanisms, expansion of public awareness campaigns and investment in the training and capacity building of law enforcement. —*PTI*



Supreme Court unveiled a new 'Lady Justice' statue where the blindfold is removed and the sword is replaced with the Constitution. The blindfold denoted impartiality and fairness and the sword the might of law. The new statue signifies 'Lady Justice' "sees" all with impartiality and shows judiciary's commitment to constitutional values. ***PHOTO: PTI***

SC REJECTS PIL TO MONITOR OTT CONTENT

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Supreme Court on Friday dismissed a PIL seeking a direction to the Centre to set up an autonomous body to monitor and filter content and regulate videos on over-the-top (OTT) and other platforms in India, saying these are policy matters.

A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said that such issue falls under the policy making domain of the executive and requires wide consultations with various stake-holders.

"This is the problem of PILs. They are all on policy (matters) now and we miss out genuine PILs," the CJI said.

Lawyer Shashank Shekhar Jha, who had filed the PIL, said he be permitted to withdraw and approach the union ministry concerned with the grievances.

The PIL also referred to the Netflix series "IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack" to highlight the need for such a regulatory mechanism as it was based on real-life incidents. —*PTI*

SC paves way for trial in cases against Dera's Ram Rahim

Supreme Court on Friday paved way for the trial of the 2015 sacrilege cases involving Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh. A bench of Justices BR Gavai and KV Vishwanathan vacated the stay imposed by the Punjab and Haryana High Court on the trial and directed Ram Rahim to respond. It will hear the matter after four weeks. Ram Rahim, is serving a 20-year sentence for allegedly raping two of his disciples.

MLA Ansari granted bail in laundering case

Supreme Court on Friday granted bail to MLA Abbas Ansari in connection with a money laundering case. Abbas is the son of gangster-politician and former MLA Mukhtar Ansari, who died in jail a few months ago. A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and Pankaj Mithal was hearing the matter. Ansari was booked in PMLA case.

SC refuses to dispose cases within fixed time

Supreme Court on Friday said it was not the American Supreme Court as it dismissed a plea seeking directions for the disposal of cases pending before all the courts in the country within a fixed time frame. The plea sought disposal of all cases in courts. "We are not the American Supreme Court," remarked the top court.

PHOTO: PTI

RG Kar: Doctors' fast-unto-death enters 14th day

KOLKATA, 18 OCT

The fast-unto-death by agitating junior doctors in West Bengal entered its 14th day on Friday over demands for justice for the deceased post-graduate trainee of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital and workplace security. So far, six fasting junior doctors have been hospitalised after deterioration in their health condition, a protesting doctor said. Currently, eight medics are on an indefinite fast at the protest site in Esplanade, located in the heart of Kolkata, he added. The protesting doctors are demanding justice for the deceased woman medic and immediate removal of state Health secretary NS Nigam. The protesting doctors said the government has not taken any concrete steps to address their 10-point charter. —*PTI*

'A man-eater' leopard shot dead in Udaipur

JAIPUR, 18 OCT

A leopard "suspected" to have turned man-eater was shot dead on Friday by a joint team of forest department and police in Rajasthan's Udaipur district, an official said. In Udaipur district, humans were hunted by leopards on 18, 19, 20, 25, 28 and 30 September. In the above incidents, the place of attack by leopards is Gram Panchayat Chhali, Bagdunda, Majavad and Madar under the jurisdiction of Deputy Forest Conservator Udaipur (North). In a fresh attack on Wednesday, the leopard attacked two women who were working in in the field in Madar village of Badgaon. One of the woman, who was seriously injured in the leopard attack, died during treatment. Divisional Forest Officer said that the leopard was an adult male, turned man-eater. —*PTI*

Molestation case: Woman set ablaze by son of accused

INDORE, 18 OCT

A 19-year-old woman from Madhya Pradesh's Khandwa district who was set on fire by the son of a man she accused of molestation has succumbed to her injuries, a police official said on Friday. Khandwa Superintendent of Police (SP) Manoj Kumar Rai said the woman died at the Government Maharaja Yeshwantrao Hospital in Indore late Thursday night. Arjun Balai, 22, had doused the woman with petrol and set her on fire on 12 October. The woman had accused Arjun of pressuring her to withdraw her complaint which had led to the registration of a molestation case against his father Mangilal Balai. After he attacked the woman, Arjun was arrested for attempting to murder and was sent to judicial custody. —*PTI*

Amethi youth killed in scuffle between 2 groups

AMETHI, 18 OCT

A 19-year-old youth died in a scuffle between two groups here, police said on Friday. Vivek Verma, a Katra Maharani village resident, allegedly had a scuffle with some people almost 200 metres from Budhau Maharaj Ghat Bhushiyava on Thursday night. Verma got critically injured in the incident and was taken to Sanjay Gandhi Hospital in Munshiganj where he was declared dead, the police said. Additional Superintendent of Police Harendra Kumar told PTI, "There is no communal angle. There was an enmity among these youths." "They had a scuffle before coming to the ghat. No serious injury marks have been found on the youth's body," he said, adding that the body has been sent for post-mortem and efforts are on to nab the accused. —*PTI*

DIRTY PICTURE

Toxic foam floats on the surface of the polluted Yamuna river, at Kalindi Kunj, in New Delhi, on Friday ***PHOTO: PTI***

Froth covers Yamuna, posing health hazard

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Yamuna river in Delhi was seen covered with a thick layer of white froth on Friday with experts saying this poses health hazards for people especially as the festive season approaches.

Multiple videos circulating on social media show vast sections of the river frothing, resembling clouds over the water, which gradually dissipated later in the day.

Bhim Singh Rawat, Associate Coordinator of the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers & People (SANDRP), told PTI, "Normally, the upper segment of the Yamuna experiences significant flood spells, but this year, there have been none during the just-concluded southwest monsoon of 2024."

"This is unusual, as the river generally witnesses at least a couple of low or medium flood spells in this segment every year," Rawat said.

While the river has some natural cleansing ability, pollution levels are alarming, he said, adding that the white froth which was seen during the monsoon this year, becomes more noticeable during festival times. Experts have urged the government to address the pollution levels in the Yamuna, especially as major festivals like Chhath Puja are approaching. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Delhi govt forms panel to tackle pollution

Environment Minister Gopal Rai on Friday said the government has formed a coordination committee each to identify and mitigate local sources of pollution at 13 locations in the city stifled with "very poor" air. Rai at a press conference said that while whole of Delhi is breathing 'poor' air, it is 'very poor' at 13 hotspots. Stubble burning had surged by 23 per cent in Haryana and 71 per cent in UP

7 MORE MAOISTS KILLED IN 4 OCTOBER ENCOUNTER, TOLL RISES TO 28

DANTEWADA, 18 OCT

Two weeks after a major encounter in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region, where initially 31 Naxalites were killed by security forces, police on Friday said Maoists have now admitted seven more of their cadres lost their lives in the same gunfight, taking the toll to 38. Police said all the 38 Naxalites gunned down in 4 October encounter, the highest fatalities suffered by Maoists in a single operation in the state's 24-year-old history, were identified and they were collectively carrying a reward of Rs 2.62 crore. With this admission, a total of 38 Naxalites were eliminated in the fierce encounter and identity of all of them have been ascertained, he said. Security personnel had recovered bodies of 31 Naxalites and a cache of automatic weapons following the encounter in the Abhujmaad area. —*PTI*

World Bank, ADB commit $1.6B for Amaravati plan

AMARAVATI, 18 OCT

World Bank along with the Asian Development Bank in principle has committed to fund USD 1600 million (Rs 13,600 crore) for Amaravati capital city phase-I development and will start releasing the amount from January next year, a senior official of the Andhra Pradesh government has said.

Of the total cost of Rs 15,000 crore for the phase-I development, the Central government will be funding the remaining Rs 1,400 crore, the official said, adding the total amount from the World Bank should be drawn within five years.

The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), part of the World Bank, which provides loans and guarantees, among others and ADB will be funding USD 800 million (Rs 6,800 crore) each for the project.

The repayment of the WB and ADB loans will be taken care of by the Centre, the official said.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu recently said the WB has agreed to extend Rs 15,000 crore for Amaravati Phase-I development and that work will start from December.

After Naidu took over the reins of power in Andhra Pradesh, the capital city project was rejuvenated with the Centre's assurance of helping to get loans from multilateral agencies.

According to a WB document, the Department of Economic Affairs at the Centre is the borrower, while the Andhra Pradesh Capital Regional Development Authority is the implementing agency. —*PTI*

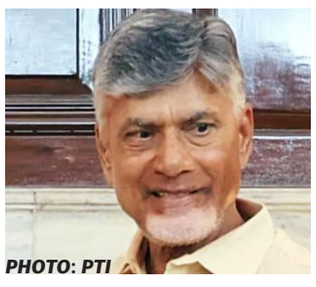


PHOTO: PTI

Hooch horror: 10 more die in dry Bihar, toll hits 35

PATNA, 18 OCT

Ten more people died after allegedly consuming illicit liquor in Bihar's Siwan and Saran districts, taking the toll in the hooch tragedy to 35, an official said on Friday.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police, Saran range, Nilesh Kumar said on Friday that while Siwan accounted for 28 fatalities, seven deaths have been reported from Saran.

"As many as 28 people in Maghar and Auriya panchayats in Siwan district have so far died after consuming suspected illicit liquor. Seven people in Ibrahimpur area under the jurisdiction of Mashrakh police station in Saran district also died after consuming suspected spurious liquor", the DIG told PTI on Friday.

The bodies have been sent for post-mortem examinations and the exact cause of the incident can only be known after receiving the autopsy reports, the DIG said. Officials have so far not disclosed the identity of the deceased and those under treatment.

Around 15 people have been arrested so far by the police in connection with incidents in both districts. The administrations of both districts have suspended three chowkidars of Maghar, Auriya and Ibrahimpur areas following the incident. Another senior police officer said show cause notices have been issued to at least five police personnel.

On Thursday, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar inquired about the progress of the investigation into the suspected hooch deaths in Siwan and Saran. —*PTI*

Family members mourn the death of hooch tragedy victims, in Saran district, Bihar, on Friday ***PHOTO: PTI***

1 DEAD AS FIRE BREAKS OUT IN BENGAL HOSPITAL

KOLKATA, 18 OCT

A major fire broke out at Sealdah ESI Hospital here on Friday morning, resulting in the death of one ICU patient.

TMC leader Kunal Ghosh said, "The cause of the fire is a short circuit. Nearly 80 patients were trapped since the fire broke out on the ground floor. Right above the fire was the oncology department, which was filled with smoke and one patient unfortunately lost his life.

Ten fire tenders were rushed to the spot and the blaze was brought under control after two hours, he said.

West Bengal Fire and Emergency Services Minister Sujit Bose rushed to the hospital after receiving reports of the fire. The minister said the fire broke out around 5:30 am. It was under now control and the cooling process is being carried out, he said.

Asked about the claim of a patient's family about the death of the patient, the minister said it was yet to be ascertained whether the death was due to fire-induced suffocation or natural cause.

A senior ESI hospital official said the fire first started on the first floor of the men's surgical ward. All the patients were safely evacuated, with some transferred to other facilities. Around 50 patients were shifted.

West Bengal Labour minister Moloy Ghatak said preliminary reports indicated the fire was caused by a short circuit. —*PTI*

AIIMS guard says boss sexually harassed her

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

A female guard at AIIMS-Delhi has accused its chief security officer of sexual harassment and caste discrimination, prompting the premier medical institute to initiate a probe into the allegations.

According to an office memorandum dated October 15, the probe will be conducted by Dr K K Verma, Dean Academics, who heads the institute's committee on redressal of grievances of SC/ ST/OBC; and Dr Punit Kaur, HoD Biophysics, who chairs the Internal Complaints Committee against sexual harassment.

Both the committees have been asked to file preliminary reports along with evidentiary material within seven days from the date of the issuance of the memorandum.

The alleged incident took place in the CSO's office. In her complaint, the security guard said that the CSO harassed her, used casteist slurs against her, and threatened to throw her out of the job. When she stepped out of his office, the CSO followed her outside, used casteist slurs, and threatened her in front of her colleagues, she said.

When contacted, AIIMS authorities refused to comment on the matter. —*PTI*

EMPOWERING CHILDREN

Kerala releases parental guide on edu needs

KANNUR, 18 OCT

In an innovative initiative, the Kerala government on Friday released a set of books aimed at empowering parents to support their children's education-related requirements from pre-primary to higher secondary levels.

The set of four books, titled 'Parents with the Growing Child', was released by state General Education Minister V Sivankutty, a government release said.

Speaking after the book release, the minister said, "Kerala has always been a leader in education with numerous exemplary initiatives. This new project further strengthens the partnership between parents, schools, and children, ensuring the comprehensive development of students." The books, designed for parents of students in public schools, are tailored to the different educational stages of Pre-Primary, Lower Primary, Upper Primary, and High School-Higher Secondary levels, the release said. They provide detailed guidance to parents on how to approach their children's growth, development, and learning needs, it said. "These books are not just reading materials but form the foundation for a scientific, structured parent education programme to be conducted by the Department of Education. Under the guidance of trained teachers, the content of these books will be shared with parents across the state," it further said.

The Kerala government is confident that these books will further enhance the involvement of parents in their children's education, reinforcing the state's position as a pioneer in public education, it said. —*PTI*

V Sivankutty ***PHOTO: X/@VSIVANKUTTYCPIM***

- The set of four books, titled 'Parents with the Growing Child', was released by state General Education Minister V Sivankutty, a government release said

SERIAL THREATS TO FLIGHTS

Why do bomb threats matter amid Canada row?

A series of bomb threats against multiple Indian airlines has rocked the country this week, throwing authorities there and across five other nations into a scramble to investigate threats amid long delays and flight diversions.

Flagship carrier, Air India, has been the target of more than a dozen warnings since Monday, along with threats targeting local private carriers.

So far, the threats have turned out to be hoaxes. However, they come amid heightened tensions between India and Canada over the long-term presence of Sikh separatists in the country.

It's a fatal combination: Sikh separatists, India, and Canada have a deadly history linked to one of the worst aviation disasters ever recorded.

Here's what you need to know about the bomb threats and why they matter as India and Canada feud:

British Canadian Inderjit Singh Reyat was convicted in 1985 Air India flight bombing. In 2023, Sikh separatist leader Gurpatwant Pannun warned people to stay away from AI flights beginning 19 NoV, 2023 **PHOTO: PTI**

RS 13 LAKH TO RS 17 LAKH...

is the loss faced by various airlines for each flight they divert due to hoax bomb threat

What bomb threats have been received?

At least 19 bomb threats have been issued on social media sites like X against aircraft in the country in the space of three days, including Air India flights and three private carriers.

Bomb threats are common, but several targeting a country in a few days is unusual.

On Monday, officials disclosed that three international flights were diverted or delayed following threats of bombing, including an Air India flight from New Delhi to Chicago, which was forced to land in a remote airport in Canada. On Wednesday, Canadian officials deployed an Air Force plane to airlift the 200-plus passengers to Chicago.

Another series of threats followed on Tuesday, including one targeting an Air India Express flight from Madurai in southern India to Singapore. The Southeast Asian nation's air force scrambled two F-15SG fighter jets to escort the aircraft to a sparsely populated bay at Changi Airport, said authorities.

Several threats were also recorded on Wednesday, targeting private carrier IndiGo's flights from Mumbai to Singapore, Mumbai to New Delhi, and Riyadh to Mumbai. Two SpiceJet flights and another Akasa flight were also affected.

Air India said on Monday that it had received several threats in recent days. Indian authorities also say they are investigating the incidents. At least one minor has been arrested in connection with some of the threats, officials say.

On Wednesday, India's aviation minister, Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu, condemned the threats in a statement on X. "I am deeply concerned over the recent disruptive acts targeting Indian airlines, affecting the domestic and international operations. Such mischievous and unlawful actions are a matter of grave concern, and I strongly condemn any attempts to compromise the safety, security and operational integrity of our aviation sector."

Why are these threats historically significant?

On 23 June, 1985, an Air India flight going from Canada to India via London exploded around the Irish coast, killing all 329 people on board. There were 307 passengers – mostly Canadian citizens of Indian origin – and 22 crew members. It was the worst aviation disaster in the world before the 9/11 attacks on the United States. It remains Canada's worst air disaster to date.

On the same day, another bomb went off in a Tokyo airport, killing two Japanese baggage handlers. The bomb was believed to have targeted another Air India flight to Bangkok before exploding prematurely. Investigators blamed Sikh separatists who were believed to be seeking revenge for the Indian Army's deadly storming of the Golden Temple in Punjab state a year earlier. At the time, the movement for a separate Sikh nation formed from Indian Punjab — called Khalistan — had gained momentum in India. Since then, the Khalistan movement has largely died in India, but has strong support among sections of the Sikh diaspora in Canada, the US, the UK and Australia.

Although several people were accused and charged over the 1985 bombings, only one was convicted: Inderjit Singh Reyat, a British Canadian electrician, served sentences in Canada and the UK between 1991 and 2016. He is now a free man.

Talwinder Singh Parmar, a Canadian Sikh separatist leader, was tried alongside Reyat but later released because the prosecution couldn't prove its case.

Canadian police in 2000 also arrested wealthy Vancouver businessman Ripudaman Singh Malik, and Ajaib Singh Bagri, a mill worker from British Columbia, on charges including mass murder and conspiracy. Both were also released.

Families of the victims have long accused Canadian authorities of not doing enough to arrest the perpetrators. In 2010, a four-year inquiry by Canadian investigators found that authorities had mishandled the investigations and that a series of errors had allowed the attacks to happen.

Have there been more recent threats?

In late 2023, Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a Sikh separatist leader based in the US, warned people in a video posted on social media to stay away from Air India flights beginning 19 November, 2023. The warning came after reports emerged of a foiled assassination plot to kill him on US soil.

Pannun, an immigration lawyer, is a leader of the US-based Sikhs for Justice group (SFJ), which is banned in India. He is known for his vocal and violent separatist advocacy for Khalistan and for anti-India videos on social media, where he sometimes encourages people to deface the Indian flag or scribble anti-India graffiti. He has been charged with terrorism and conspiracy in India. In October 2023, he threatened to carry out a 'Hamas-like' attack on India, in the wake of Hamas' deadly attacks on Israel.

An Indian secret service agent directed a plot to assassinate Pannun, according to an indictment released by the US Department of Justice last November. The operative was also linked to a separate high-profile murder of a Sikh separatist leader in Canada – also in 2023.

The US operation was foiled after Nikhil Gupta, a New Delhi businessman hired by the Indian agent, unknowingly partnered with a US secret service informant to carry out the murder, leading to his arrest, according to US authorities. Gupta's lawyers are expected to meet prosecutors on Thursday to seek a plea deal.

What's the current India-Canada crisis about?

Tensions ignited by the bomb threats come amid a deepening spat between India and Canada that has seen both sides expel or withdraw dozens of diplomats over the past year.

In September 2023 Canadian President Justin Trudeau, speaking in parliament, first accused India of the killing of Sikh separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was fatally shot outside a temple in Surrey, a Vancouver suburb, on 18 June.

Central government dismissed the allegations as "absurd" and asked Canada instead to crack down on the anti-India groups operating from its territory. For years, India has accused Canada of harbouring Sikh separatists, although Canada denies it.

Sikh groups have carried out unofficial referendums on Khalistan in Canada. Nijjar, 45, was wanted in India for an alleged attack on a Hindu priest in the country.

Four Indian nationals, whom Canadian authorities say are linked to a notorious Indian crime boss, have been arrested for his murder.

Why have tensions escalated?

On Monday, the spat escalated after Canadian officials expelled India's High Commissioner, Sanjay Kumar Verma, and five other Indian diplomats, accusing them of involvement in the Nijjar assassination and other "acts of violence" against Sikh separatists. Trudeau said the Canadian police had uncovered "clear and compelling" evidence of Indian government involvement in Nijjar's killing and targeting of others.

"This includes clandestine information-gathering techniques, coercive behaviour targeting South Asian Canadians, and involvement in over a dozen threatening and violent acts, including murder," Trudeau told reporters at a news conference.

—Courtesy, Al Jazeera

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

1D were GenZ's 1st boy band & Liam its grounding force

Liam Payne's voice is the first one heard in the culture-shifting boy band One Direction's debut single: 'What Makes You Beautiful' launches into a bouncy guitar riff, a cheeky and borderline gratuitous cowbell and then, Payne.

"You're insecure, don't know what for / You're turning heads when you walk through the door," he sings, in a few words assuring a cross-section of generations that he's got your back, girl, and you should like yourself a little bit more.

Payne, who died on Wednesday after falling from a hotel balcony in Buenos Aires, Argentina, at just 31, was also the last solo voice on the band's final single, 'History', effectively opening and closing the monolithic run of one of the biggest boy bands of all time.

While the exact circumstances of his death remain unclear — Buenos Aires police said in a statement that Payne "had jumped from the balcony of his room," although they didn't offer details on how they established that or whether it was intentional — in life, Payne was a critical part of the internet's first boy band, one that secured an indelible place in the hearts of millennial and Gen Z fans.

Before One Direction became One Direction, its members auditioned for the UK's 'The X Factor' separately. The judges decided to put five promising, but not yet excellent, boys into a group. They were Harry Styles, Niall Horan, Louis Tomlinson, Zayn Malik and Payne, who together finished third in the 2010 competition.

As Rolling Stone contributing editor Rob Sheffield points out, it was an "unprecedented" way for a boy band to get their start.

"They were sort of assigned to be together. And you don't expect longevity out of that situation. Honestly, you don't even expect one good pop record to come out of that situation," he says. And yet, not only did it work, but One Direction essentially created "a new template for pop stardom, really."

The show allowed fans to follow their career before their official 2011 launch with 'What Makes You Beautiful'. Nascent fans could use rising social media platforms like Twitter and Tumblr to find community, draw attention to the group and, in the earliest days, speak directly to the members.

"I honestly made a Twitter so that I could keep up with One Direction, and that's how I made so many different friends," says Gabrielle Kopera, 28, a fan from California who remembers the band hosting livestreams and chats. "Sometimes they would say something back and it was so much fun. I feel like that fan interaction doesn't even happen anymore."

That feeling of accessibility reinforced the group's personality and relationship with fans, says Maura Johnston, a freelance music writer and Boston College adjunct instructor.

"The fact that they came up on this British TV show and they became this worldwide phenomenon, I don't think that would have happened as acutely and as quickly and as immersive without social media, without Twitter or without people being able to mobilize around the globe," she says.

Millennial and Gen Z audiences practically grew up with One Direction, but the band was truly ubiquitous. That, Johnston says, is at least partially attributable to arriving in a very different media environment from today's. "It was a lot more focused," she says of the early 2010s. "Algorithmic sorting of stuff hadn't really taken hold. So, there was this broader, mass approach. They were one of the last gasps of that mass phenomenon, that anyone of any age, even if they weren't a fan, had to take notice to."

But it takes more than omnipresence to cultivate a loyal fanbase. And there were myriad reasons why listeners were attracted to One Direction.

"They were five very different musical personalities, along with five very different personalities," says Sheffield.

They broke the rules associated with traditional boy bands, too: "They co-wrote many of their songs. They didn't do, you know, corny, choreographed steps on stage," he said.

After the news of Payne's death, Kopera says she "got so many messages from people I haven't talked to in years reaching out because I think everyone kind of realised that it does feel like we just lost a family member."

That sentiment was mirrored in the masses of fans who gathered Wednesday outside Buenos Aires' Casa Sur Hotel, feeding a burgeoning makeshift memorial of flowers, candles and notes as police stood guard.

"I've always loved One Direction since I was little," said Juana Relh, 18, outside Payne's hotel. "To see that he died and that there will never be another reunion of the boys is unbelievable, it kills me." Payne was a "brooding" older brother-type in One Direction, says Johnston. He also co-wrote many songs, especially in their later career — like the Fleetwood Mac-channeling 'What A Feeling' and 'Fireproof'.

"He was this grounding force in the band," Johnston says. In an Instagram tribute, Tomlinson called Payne "the most vital part of One Direction." "His experience from a young age, his perfect pitch, his stage presence, his gift for writing. The list goes on. Thank you for shaping us Liam," he wrote. *—PTI*

We're completely devastated by the news of Liam's passing. In time, and when everyone is able to, there will be more to say. But for now, we will take some time to grieve and process the loss of our brother, who we loved dearly. The memories we shared with him will be treasured forever. We love you Liam
—Louis, Zayn, Niall and Harry

Before One Direction became One Direction, its members Niall Horan, Harry Styles, Liam Payne, Zayn Malik and Louis Tomlinson auditioned for the UK's 'The X Factor' separately **PHOTO: WIREIMAGE**

Once a Cong citadel, M'rashtra coast is now Senas' battleground

Maharashtra's coastal belt, stretching from Mumbai to the southernmost district of Sindhudurg, was once a Congress citadel, but the party lost ground to the undivided Shiv Sena over the years.

The coastal Konkan belt's economy was known to be dependent on money orders sent from Mumbai, where most of its residents migrated for work and business after Maharashtra achieved statehood in 1960. But the situation is no longer the same.

The region accounts for 75 of the total 288 state Assembly seats, including 36 in Mumbai, and is expected to play a key role in deciding which coalition – ruling Mahayuti or opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) – governs Maharashtra after the November 20 polls.

Former chief minister and BJP Lok Sabha MP from Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg Narayan Rane, who hails from the picturesque region, told PTI that Konkan has now become self-sufficient, thriving on exports of fish, mangoes and cashews.

"Youths are embracing entrepreneurship. Infrastructure has also expanded with enhanced air and rail connectivity. There is sufficient electricity and water. The region has seen tremendous economic transformation," said Rane, who won as Shiv Sena MLA from Malwan in Sindhudurg for the first time in 1990.

"I want to develop Ratnagiri as a tourism district, similar to Sindhudurg," said the 72-year-old politician credited with establishing and expanding the undivided Shiv Sena before quitting the party.

State Minister Chhagan Bhujbal, who was the lone Shiv Sena MLA to get elected on "mashal" (flaming torch) symbol from Mumbai (Mazgaon seat) in 1985, said the political realignments of the last five years would have a greater impact on urban areas than on rural ones.

Bhujbal, now with the Ajit Pawar-led NCP, pointed out that the undivided Shiv Sena and the Congress were once bitter rivals in the region.

But after the 2022 split in the Shiv Sena, Thane district, part of the Konkan division and political turf of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, will see a clash between the rival factions, he opined.

"I feel more than 30 Independents will be elected (all over Maharashtra) and they will hold the key to the next government formation," Bhujbal maintained.

Journalist Vaibhav Purandare, author of the book 'Bal Thackeray and the Rise of the Shiv Sena', explained that the regional saffron party, founded in 1966, grew in Mumbai and Konkan at the expense of Communists and Socialists, who once had significant influence in the region.

All eyes are now on the Sena factions led by Eknath Shinde and his predecessor Uddhav Thackeray **PHOTO: PTI**

"Shiv Sena took on Communists with the support of Congress. Once Communists were decimated, mill workers of Mumbai, earlier aligned with Communists, shifted their loyalty to the Shiv Sena. These mill workers from Konkan came to Mumbai to work so their families in Konkan also supported the Sena," said Purandare.

In the mid-1980s, the Shiv Sena, which started out as a son-of-the-soil party, adopted Hindutva and became a key rival of the Congress which was guided by "secularism".

By the 1980s, Shiv Sena had made major gains in Mumbai, and by 1990, it formed an alliance with the BJP on the common platform of Hindutva. In 1995, the Shiv Sena-BJP formed a government.

This partnership reshaped the politics of the region, where the Shiv Sena continued to grow at the expense of Congress.

Stalwarts like Hashu Advani, Ram Naik, and Ram Kapse played pivotal roles in the BJP's success. Shiv Sena leaders like Chhagan Bhujbal, Leeladhar Dake, and Pramod Navalkar helped the party grow during the 1980s.

In 2014, riding on the "Modi wave", the BJP made inroads into Mumbai and its surrounding regions. Data shows Congress's slide in Konkan began in 1978. The Shiv Sena expanded itself at the cost of Communists and other smaller parties opposed to the Congress to emerge as a rival to the Grand Old Party.

In 1962, the coastal belt had 57 assembly seats, a number which has now gone up to 75.

From 1962 to 1978, the Congress held sway in Mumbai and other parts of Konkan, while non-Congress space was occupied by the Peasants and Workers Party (PWP), Praja Socialist Party, RPI and Socialist Party of India.

Literary stalwart Acharya Pralhad Keshav Atre was elected from Dadar in Mumbai as an independent. In 1972, Pramod Navalkar of the Shiv Sena won from Girgaum in Mumbai with Congress support, while Mrinal Gore was elected on a Socialist Party of India ticket from Malad in the metropolis.

Bharatiya Jana Sangh (predecessor of BJP) won an Assembly seat for the first time in Mumbai in 1967. In the same year, trade union leader Datta Samant won on an RPI ticket and again in 1980 as an Independent. Congress' decline started in the 1978 Assembly elections, the first since the Emergency was lifted, and it was wiped out in Mumbai.

However, in the subsequent years, Congress recovered some lost ground in the region.

NCP came into existence in 1999 when veteran politician Sharad Pawar walked out of Congress. Congress got further weakened in the belt, especially in Thane.

Since 2014, BJP has emerged as the dominant force in the coastal belt. In 2019, political dynamics shifted yet again, with the once-rivals Shiv Sena Congress becoming allies. This was followed by a split in the regional saffron party with Shiv Sena (UBT) coming into existence. All eyes are now on the Sena factions, led by Shinde, backed by BJP, and his predecessor Uddhav Thackeray, and their performance in the coastal belt in the 20 November polls.

Votes will be counted on 23 November. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

King Charles III, Camilla in Aus for historic first tour

MELBOURNE, 18 OCT

King Charles III and Queen Camilla arrived in Sydney on Friday for the first Australian visit by a reigning monarch in more than a decade, a trip that has rekindled debate about the nation's constitutional links to Britain. The Sydney Opera House's iconic sails will be illuminated with images of previous royal visits to welcome the couple, whose six-day trip will be brief by royal standards. Charles, 75, is being treated for cancer, which led to the scaled-down itinerary. He is only the second reigning British monarch to visit Australia. His mother, Queen Elizabeth II, became the first 70 years ago. Opponents hope for a rejection of the concept that someone from the other side of the world is Australia's head of state.
—PTI

Baby dies as boat sinks off French coast

PARIS, 18 OCT

A baby has died after a boat carrying asylum seekers towards the United Kingdom sank in the English Channel off the coast of France, the authorities said. The local coastguard in France said on Friday the incident took place on Thursday night off the French town of Wissant. The French maritime prefecture for the English Channel and the North Sea said 65 people were rescued and taken to the port at Boulogne-sur-Mer. Authorities said searches are ongoing to find any more missing people. An investigation has been launched by the public prosecutor's office in Boulogne-sur-Mer. The latest sinking raises the death toll of migrants attempting to cross the Channel this year to at least 52.
—Courtesy, Al Jazeera

Seven killed in suicide bombing at Somalian cafe

MOGADISHU, 18 OCT

Seven people have been killed and six injured after a suicide bomber detonated an unidentified device at a cafe outside a police training school in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu. According to police, both officers and civilians were among the victims, who had been drinking tea outside the General Kaahiye Police Academy on Thursday. "The explosion occurred under trees where residents of the area spend time to rest," a police statement said. Al-Shabab, the armed group linked to al-Qaeda, claimed responsibility. The group targets military in its efforts to overthrow Somalia's government, which has launched offensive against it.
—Courtesy, Al Jazeera

Kenya Parliament approves new Deputy President

NAIROBI, 18 OCT

Kenya's parliament has approved the nomination of Interior Minister Kithure Kindiki as the new Deputy President, a day after the Senate voted to impeach Rigathi Gachagua. The decision comes after President William Ruto nominated Kindiki as his deputy on Friday. "I have received a message from ... the president, regarding the nomination of Professor Kithure Kindiki to fill the vacancy which has occurred in the office," Speaker Moses Wetangula told the National Assembly, the lower house of parliament, ahead of the approval. Kindiki, a close ally of Ruto, has held the interior ministry post through Ruto's two years as president. He previously served as senator for Tharaka-Nithi County and was a top contender to be Ruto's running mate during the 2022 election.
—Courtesy, Al Jazeera

Hezbollah vows new phase of war with Israel

Netanyahu urges terror groups to lay down arms, promising to let them live if they do so

TEHRAN, 18 OCT

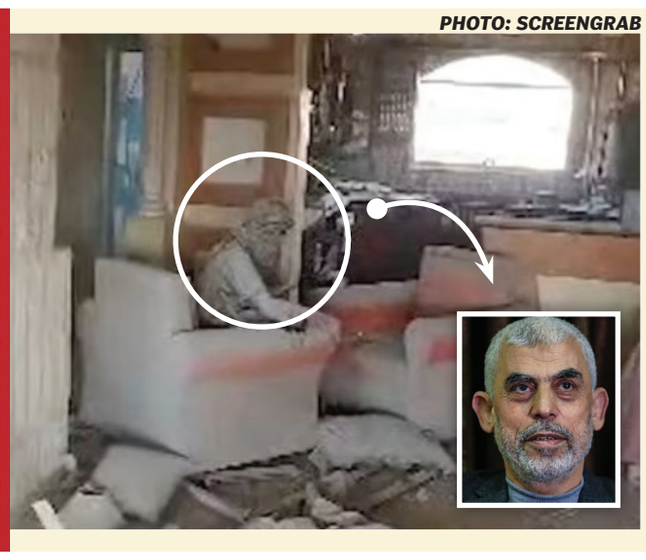
Iran's mission to the United Nations said on Friday that the killing of Hamas terror group leader Yahya Sinwar would lead to the strengthening of "resistance" in the region, hours after Israel confirmed it had killed the terror chief, while Lebanon's Hezbollah declared a "transition to a new and escalatory phase" in the war. Hamas confirmed Sinwar's death on Friday. They reiterated its stance that hostages taken from Israel a year ago will not be released until there is a cease-fire in Gaza and a withdrawal of Israeli troops.

The Islamic Republic shared a still image taken from drone footage of Sinwar's last moments, in which the terror leader is seen, face covered and injured, throwing a stick at the Israeli surveillance device.

The mission compared Sinwar with Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, a longtime foe of Iran whom American troops captured in 2003.

MOMENTS BEFORE DEATH

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB



The Israeli Defence Forces on Friday released a footage from a drone that captured Hamas Chief Yahya Sinwar's last moments before his death in a fire-fight against the troops in Gaza's Rafah. The viral video shows a building filled with debris, where a man is seen sitting on an armchair with his face wrapped, who is supposedly Sinwar.

However Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday urged members of the terror group holding the hostages to lay down their arms, promising to let them live if they do so. He also said the war could "end tomorrow" if Hamas surrendered and freed all the hostages.

Lebanon's Hezbollah terror group, meanwhile, said it was launching a new phase in its war against Israel, saying it has used precision-guided missiles to target troops.

In a statement Hezbollah announced "the transition to a new and escalatory phase in the confrontation with the Israeli enemy," adding that precision-guided missiles "are being used for the first time."
—PTI

2 Indian nationals sanctioned for 'ties' with Houthis

WASHINGTON DC, 18 OCT

The US has sanctioned 18 companies and individuals, including two Indians, for their alleged ties to a Houthi network transporting Iranian oil, revenue from which enables Houthi attacks on Israel and disrupting shipping in the Red Sea region.

The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned the companies, including the captains of vessels transporting illicit oil, for their ties to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force-backed Houthi financial official Sa'id al-Jamal and his network, a press release said on Thursday.

The 18 companies sanctioned include Marshall Islands-registered Changtai Shipping and Motionavigations Limited and UAE-based Indo Gulf Ship Management.

The release said that UAE and India-based Indian national Rahul Rattanlal Warikoo acts as the managing director of Indo Gulf Ship Management. He has also served in management roles for US-designated companies Safe Seas Ship Management and Aurum Ship Management, which have been implicated in Iranian oil shipments for Iran's Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics and the al-Jamal network.

The US said that the revenue from al-Jamal's network continues to enable Houthi attacks in the region, including missile and unmanned aerial vehicle attacks on Israel and commercial vessels transiting the Red Sea.
—PTI

10K N KOREANS COULD JOIN RUSSIAN FORCES: ZELENSKYY

BRUSSELS, 18 OCT

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Thursday said that his government has intelligence information that 10,000 troops from North Korea being prepared to join Russian forces fighting against his country. He warned that a third nation wading into the hostilities would turn the conflict into a "world war."

He told EU leaders that "we can end this war no later than next year" if his "victory" plan is followed.
—PTI

SOUTH KOREAN INTEL SAYS N KOREA IS SENDING TROOPS TO RUSSIA

SEOUL, 18 OCT

South Korean intelligence has found that North Korea has dispatched 12,000 troops including special operation forces to support Russia's war against Ukraine, news reports said Friday. A statement said participants of the meeting agreed that North Korea's troop dispatch poses a grave security threat to South Korea and the international community. But the presidential office gave no details on number of soldiers sent to Ukraine.
—PTI

TAIWAN URGES CHINA TO RECONSIDER ACTIONS AMID CHAOS

TAIPEI, 18 OCT

Taipei has urged Beijing to reconsider its actions after China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) announced it had received numerous reports on individuals labelled as "diehard Taiwan independence separatists." Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) said on Wednesday, "No matter how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) investigates, wrong actions will only lead to wrong outcomes," Focus Taiwan reported.
—ANI

Students throw stones toward police during clashes as they protest over an alleged on-campus rape in Punjab, in Rawalpindi, Pakistan PHOTO: PTI

Pak shuts schools for 2 days over protests

LAHORE, 18 OCT

Authorities in Pakistan's eastern Punjab province shut all schools and universities for two days on Friday in an attempt to contain the spread of protests by students over an alleged on-campus rape.

The closures in Pakistan's most populous province affect an estimated 18 million students.

Tensions have been high on college campuses since reports of the alleged rape in the eastern city of Lahore spread on social media, and protests have broken out in four cities.

The decision to shut all schools in Punjab came a day after hundreds of students ransacked a college building in the garrison city of Rawalpindi. Police fired tear gas and charged at the students, arresting more than 250 people.

The protests appear to have begun spontaneously, as student unions have been banned in Pakistan since 1984. There are no organisations representing students, although political parties' youth wings exist.

Separately, the political party of imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan announced it will hold protests across the country on Friday to oppose any amendments to the country's Constitution.

Khan's supporters say Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who replaced Khan after his ouster in 2022 in a no-confidence vote in parliament, wants to appoint judges of his own choosing and set up a new constitutional court in parallel with the Supreme Court. The government denies the allegations.Sexual violence against women is common in Pakistan but is underreported because of stigma in the conservative country. Protests about the issue have been rare.
—PTI

'Nijjar murder a cover for Trudeau'

OTTAWA, 18 OCT

A Canadian Opposition leader has accused Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** of using Hardeep Singh Nijjar's murder to divert attention from other controversies and asked the government to posthumously take away the Khalistani militant's citizenship to right the past administrative error.

Maxime Bernier, the leader of the People's Party of Canada, also said the Khalistani militant who is the central figure in the whole controversy was a foreign terrorist who was somehow granted citizenship in 2007.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) said Monday it had identified India's High Commissioner in the country and five other diplomats as persons of interest in the June 2023 killing of Nijjar. The RCMP also said they uncovered evidence of an intensifying campaign against Canadians by agents of the Indian government.

"One myth should be dispelled though: That the central figure in this controversy, Hardeep Singh Nijjar, the Khalistani militant who was murdered last year, was a Canadian. He was actually foreign terrorist who used fraudulent documents to claim asylum in Canada several times starting in 1997. His claims were rejected but he was nevertheless allowed to stay in this country and was somehow granted citizenship in 2007," he said.

PHOTO: PTI

The relations between India and Canada came under severe strain following Trudeau's allegations in September last year of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Nijjar, who was gunned down in Surrey, British Columbia. New Delhi had rejected Trudeau's charges as "absurd". India has criticised Trudeau's government for being soft on supporters of the Khalistan movement. The Khalistan movement is banned in India but has support among the Sikh diaspora, particularly in Canada.
—PTI

Biden meets with European allies ahead of Prez polls

BERLIN, 18 OCT

US President Joe Biden on Fridaymet with European allies for closed-door conversations about Russia's war in Ukraine and the conflict in the Middle East. But with the US presidential election just weeks away and the race extremely tight, there are worries that a Trump victory could upset the relationships that Biden is hoping to pass on to Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee.

Republican candidate Donald Trump expressed indifference to the security of Ukraine, refusing to say during a presidential debate if he wants the US ally to win its war against Russia. He's voiced doubts about coming to the defence of NATO members if they come under attack. White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan rejected the notion that Biden wants to "Trump-proof" US foreign policy, because of the political implications of that term. He seem designed to thwart efforts by a potential Trump administration to stop military aid to Ukraine after more than two years of fighting.

Trump maintains that if he were still president, Russia would never have invaded Ukraine in 2022 and Hamas would never have attacked Israel in 2023.
—PTI

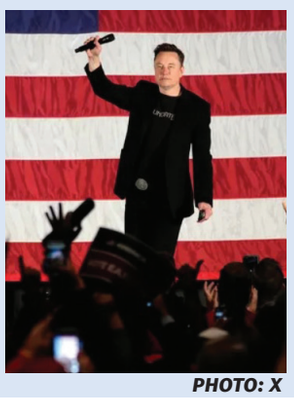


PHOTO: X

Musk holds his first solo event in support of Trump in Philadelphia

Folsom, 18 Oct

Tesla CEO Elon Musk held his first solo event in support of Donald Trump for president on Thursday, encouraging voters in the Philadelphia suburbs to register to cast their ballots and vote early, though some attendees shouted back, "Why?" The event was billed as a call to action to vote early in the crucial battleground state of Pennsylvania, where Trump and Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris are fiercely contesting the election.
—PTI

40% IN CONFLICT AREAS

Over 1B live in acute poverty: UN Report

UNITED NATIONS, 18 OCT

More than 1 billion people in the world live in acute poverty, over half are children and nearly 40 per cent live in conflict-torn and fragile countries, according to a report released on Thursday.

The report by the UN Development Programme and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative at the University of Oxford also said that more than 83 per cent of poor people live in rural areas — and the same percentage live in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

The UN Development Programme and Oxford have been publishing the Multidimensional Poverty Index, known as the MPI, since 2010 using 10 indicators including health, education and standard of living.

This year's index included data from 112 countries with a combined population of 6.3 billion people PHOTO: PIXABAY

This year's index included data from 112 countries with a combined population of 6.3 billion people. According to the index, 1.1 billion people live in acute poverty, with nearly half in five countries: India with 234 million impoverished people, Pakistan with 93 million, Ethiopia with 86 million, Nigeria with 74 million and Congo with 66 million.

Over half of the people living in poverty — 584 million — are children under the age of 18, with 317 million in sub-Saharan Africa and 184 million in South Asia, it said. In Afghanistan, the proportion of impoverished children is nearly 59 per cent. UNDP and Oxford said this year's report focused on poverty amid conflict because 2023 saw more conflicts than at any time since World War II and that an all-time high of 117 million people were forced to flee their homes due to conflict, disasters and other factors.
—PTI

Singapore detains 17-year-old for attack plot on non-Muslims

SINGAPORE, 18 OCT

PHOTO: PTI

Singapore has detained a 17-year-old self-radicalised supporter of terror group ISIS under the Internal Security Act (ISA) mere weeks before his planned attack on non-Muslim males in a public housing estate.

The teenager, purportedly influenced by the ongoing Hamas strikes and developments around Syria, wanted to use either a kitchen knife or a pair of scissors from his home as his weapon, said the Internal Security Department (ISD) in a press release on Friday.

It was a "very close shave as he could have easily gone on a rampage", Singapore's Minister for Law and Home Affairs K Shanmugam said.

"I would say this is one of the ones where it was quite close, fairly close," Shanmugam said on the duration between the teen's arrest and the planned attack. Shanmugam pointed out that the area that the teen had intended for the attack was frequented by "thousands of people" every day, including senior citizens and young children, and that it would be even more crowded during the school holidays being a main housing estate area with shopping malls and leisure facilities.
—PTI

PHOTO:PTI

Panels on GST to meet today over tax on insurance

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

The two ministerial panels set up by the GST Council are slated to meet on 19 October to discuss GST rate rationalisation and lowering 18 per cent tax rate on health and life insurance premiums. This would be the first meeting of the 13-member GoM, under Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, which was set up to suggest tax on health and life insurance premiums. The panel, which includes ministers from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Meghalaya, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Telangana, has been mandated to submit its report to the GST Council by October end. *—PTI*

Rupee slips 1 paisa to 84.07 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 18 OCT

The rupee traded on a flat note to settle just 1 paisa lower at 84.07 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday as lower crude oil prices and a weak greenback offset the impact of persistent foreign capital outflows. A positive momentum in the domestic equity markets supported the local currency and restricted its fall, traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 84.06 against the greenback and stayed almost flat during the entire session. The unit finally settled at 84.07 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a loss of 1 paisa from its previous close. On Thursday, the rupee weakened by 4 paise to close at 84.06 against the US dollar. *—PTI*

Godavari Biorefineries IPO to open on 23 Oct

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Ethanol and bio-based chemicals maker Godavari Biorefineries Ltd on Friday fixed a price band of Rs 334-352 per share for its Rs 555-crore Initial Public Offering (IPO), which will open for subscription on 23 October. The initial share sale will conclude on 25 October and the bidding for anchor investors will open for a day on 22 October, the company announced. The proposed initial share sale is a combination of fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 325 crore and an Offer for Sale (OFS) of 65.27 lakh equity shares valued Rs 230 crore, at the upper end of the price band, by promoters and an investor. This translates into the total IPO size of Rs 555 crore. Private equity firm Mandala Capital AG Ltd is offloading 49.27 lakh shares through the OFS route. Proceeds from the fresh issue to the tune of Rs 240 crore will be used for debt payment and the remaining amount for general corporate purposes. *—PTI*

Uber partners with IAF to offer mobility solutions

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

A leading cab aggregator has joined hands with the IAF to offer mobility solutions for official travel and commute of air force personnel and their families, according to an official statement issued on Thursday. An MoU was signed between the Indian Air Force (IAF) and Uber to that effect, a senior official said. Through the collaboration, the IAF will leverage Uber for Business, a platform that enables organisations to customise Uber's extensive scale and comprehensive travel benefits, ensuring a seamless commuting experience, it said. The company will also facilitate effective change management for official travel and daily commutes, while offering enterprise benefits tailored to the unique needs of the IAF, it said. *—PTI*

RBI may act against more NBFCs: Morgan Stanley

RBI bans 4 NBFCs from sanctioning loans for norm violation

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

As Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday sought action against four Non-Banking Financial Companies(NBFCs) asking them to cease and desist from making new loan sanctions and disbursements, a report by Morgan Stanley suggests more lending companies might face similar scrutiny.

RBI on Thursday directed four NBFCs, including two microfinance institutions (MFIs), to halt the sanction and disbursal of new loans starting on concerns over their excessive interest rates and non-compliance with established financial regulations.

According to RBI, Asirvad Micro Finance Limited (Chennai), Arohan Financial Services Limited (Kolkata), DMI Finance Private Limited (New Delhi), and Navi Finserv Limited (Bengaluru) were directed to cease and desist from sanction and disbursal of loans, effective from close of business of 21 October, 2024.

RBI's restrictions will stay in place until these NBFCs show that they have fully aligned their practices with regulatory guidelines **PHOTO: ANI**

The report noted that lending rates at Asirvad Microfinance, one of the impacted NBFCs, are not significantly different from other lenders, based on data provided by MFIN, an industry body for microfinance lenders.

The report observes and asks whether lending rates alone were the cause for concern by RBI against specified NBFCs or whether broader issues are at play.

The Morgan Stanley report observes that more regulatory action might follow in the sector. Although, it clarifies and believes that the RBI's intention is not to shut down new lending by microfinance institutions and NBFCs entirely.

It says a sharp rise in credit costs was observed at Asirvad, which was also seen at other companies in the sector.

"This could mean that either lending rates, in isolation, were not the issue at Asirvad, or there is likely more action to follow across lenders. We don't think RBI's intent would be to shut down new lending to the sector" the report said.

RBI's restrictions will stay in place until these NBFCs show that they have fully aligned their practices with regulatory guidelines.

—PTI

In one of the largest decreases, forex kitty drops $10B to $690.43B

MUMBAI, 18 OCT

Declining for the second straight week, India's forex reserves dropped USD 10.746 billion to USD 690.43 billion for the week ended October 11 in one of the largest decreases in the kitty in recent times, the RBI said on Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the reserves had dropped by USD 3.709 billion to USD 701.176 billion.

At the end of September, the reserves had hit an all-time high of USD 704.885 billion.

For the week ended 11 October, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 10.542 billion to USD 602.101 billion, the data released on Friday showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

For the week ended 11 October, foreign currency assets decreased by USD 10.542 billion to USD 602.101 billion **PHOTO: PTI**

Gold reserves decreased by USD 98 million to USD 65.658 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down by USD 86 million to USD 18.339 billion, the apex bank said. India's reserve position with the IMF was down by USD 20 million to USD 4.333 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank data showed. *—PTI*

MOODY'S ASSIGNS FIRST-TIME BAA3 RATING TO BAJAJ

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Global rating agency Moody's has assigned a first-time Baa3 rating indicating investment grade to Bajaj Finance Ltd (BFL) with stable outlook.

The company's ratings consider its strong and entrenched franchise as the largest retail oriented NBFC in India with a sizable customer base and distribution network; its diversified loan book, which supports its high risk-adjusted profitability; its capitalization; and its competitive funding costs, BFL said quoting Moody's statement.

BFL will likely continue gaining market share and further augmenting its already sizable franchise with consolidated assets under management of Rs 3.5 trillion (USD 42 billion) as of June 2024, it said.

BFL's strong loan diversification gives it flexibility to calibrate loan growth depending on the prevailing asset quality trends in the respective segments, it said. *—PTI*

IT SHARES FALL

Mkt snaps 3-day slide on value buying in banking

MUMBAI, 18 OCT

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty bounced back on Friday after three days of fall, led by value buying in banking, financials and metal stocks and firm global market trends.

Recovering from its early lows, the BSE Sensex climbed 218.14 points or 0.27 per cent to settle at 81,224.75. During the day, it jumped 384.54 points or 0.47 per cent to 81,391.15.

The NSE Nifty ended 104.20 points or 0.42 per cent higher at 24,854.05.

Also, buying by domestic institutional investors supported market recovery.

From the 30 Sensex firms, Axis Bank jumped nearly 6 per cent after the company's consolidated net profit for the September quarter rose by 19.29 per cent to Rs 7,401.26 crore. ICICI Bank, Tata Motors, Tata Steel, NTPC, JSW Steel, State Bank of India and Adani Ports were the other big gainers.

Among the blue-chip pack, Infosys tanked over 4 per cent after its second quarter earnings failed to cheer investors.

India's second-largest IT services exporter on Thursday reported a near 5 per cent rise in its second quarter net profit and raised revenue guidance for the year on broad-based recovery in demand particularly from its key financial industry clients. Asian Paints, Nestle, Tech Mahindra, HCL Technologies, Hindustan Unilever and ITC were the other big laggards. The BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.21 per cent while smallcap gauge dipped 0.16 per cent. IT fell by 1.73 per cent. *—PTI*

Wipro shares surge 6% post Q2 earnings

Shares of IT company Wipro climbed nearly 6 per cent on Friday after the firm posted a 21.2 per cent year-on-year rise in consolidated net profit for Q2 FY25. The company's stock advanced 5.52 per cent to Rs 558 on the BSE. At NSE, it jumped 5.60 per cent to Rs 558.40. *—PTI*

JSW to supply 1,200MW power to Maharashtra

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

JSW Energy on Friday said that its two arms have signed agreements to supply 1,200 MW of power to Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company.

JSW Renew Energy Six Ltd and JSW Renew Energy Thirty Ltd, step-down subsidiaries of JSW Energy, have signed power purchase agreements (PPAs) with Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd (MSEDCL) for state transmission utility (STU)-connected solar-wind hybrid capacity, according to a company statement.

The agreements have been signed for two hybrid projects, each with a capacity of 600 MW, totalling 1,200 MW.

The projects are expected to be commissioned within 24 months

Currently, the company has a project pipeline of 8.3 GW, with PPAs signed for 4.4 GW.

JSW Energy has total locked-in generation capacity of 18.2 GW, comprising 7.7 GW operational, 2.1 GW under-construction across wind, thermal and hydro, and RE pipeline of 8.3 GW. *—PTI*

'OPPRESSIVE, MISMANAGEMENT'

Ashneer withdraws plea against BharatPe

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Ashneer Grover, co-founder and former managing director of BharatPe, withdrew his plea from the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), in which he had alleged oppressive conduct and mismanagement by the board of the fintech firm.

The withdrawal of the plea from the NCLT's Delhi bench came after Grover reached a settlement with the company on September 30, 2024.

A copy of the settlement agreement was also placed before the NCLT by the counsel appearing for Grover, who had filed an application for withdrawal of the petition.

Besides, on 17 October, Grover also withdrew a plea from the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), where he had sought an early hearing of the case in NCLT. In his petition, Grover had sought his reinstatement as Managing Director of the company and the changes in the management of the company by altering the board of the Resilient Innovations Pvt Ltd, which is doing business as BharatPe, to be declared "illegal". Grover was removed from the position of managing director of BharatPe by the company's board in March 2022. *—PTI*

Ashneer Grover **PHOTO: PTI**

DGCA FINES AKASA AIR ₹30L FOR LAPSES

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Aviation regulator DGCA on Thursday imposed a fine of Rs 30 lakh on Akasa Air for certain lapses in training of crew, according to sources.

"We acknowledge receipt of an order by the DGCA dated 17 October, 2024. We are working closely with the regulator on this matter," an airline spokesperson said in a statement.

The sources said the penalty has been imposed for certain training lapses. "For us at Akasa Air, safety is of the utmost importance, and we are committed to pursuing the highest global standards of safety," the statement said. *—PTI*

India's consumer retail saw deals worth $3.1 billion: Grant Thornton

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

India's consumer retail sector is poised for continued growth as it saw 123 deals valued at USD 3.1 billion in the third quarter of 2024, driven by rapid expansion of quick commerce and direct-to-consumer brands, Grant Thornton said in its latest report.

Since Q3 2023, the consumer and retail sector has led the way in driving overall deal activity, accounting for 20 per cent of the total volumes in Q3, and the quarter witnessed the highest level of activity in the past two years.

Mergers and acquisitions (M&A) activities recorded the highest quarterly deal volumes since Q1 2022, while the values of these deals witnessed a 26 percent increase over the previous quarter. However, the report added that M&A and Private Equity (PE) deal values declined 9 percent from Q2 2024, primarily due to non-disclosed M&A deal values and small-ticket PE transactions.

Since Q3 2023, the consumer and retail sector has led the way in driving overall deal activity **PHOTO: ANI**

Interestingly, the small-ticket transactions in the PE space dominated the transaction, impacting overall deal values.

The M&A activity in the space saw 31 deals valued at USD 629 million in the third quarter.

The deal value rose 36 per cent from USD 462 million in the second quarter of 2024 to USD 629 million. Domestic M&A led the activities led the activity with 90 per cent share in the volume and 97 per cent shares in the value term. *—ANI*

SILVER AT RS 94,500/KG

Gold price sets new record of Rs 79,900; glitters its way to Rs 80,000 mark

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Gold hit a record high of Rs 79,900 per 10g on Friday in the national capital, rising by Rs 550 on strong festive season demand, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 79,350 per 10g in the previous trade on Thursday.

Rallying for the third consecutive day, gold of 99.5 per cent purity bounced Rs 550 to hit a fresh high of Rs 79,500 per 10g. It had settled at Rs 78,950 per 10g in the previous session.

Meanwhile, silver leapt Rs 1,000 to Rs 94,500 per kilogram. On Thursday, silver remained flat at Rs 93,500 per kg.

Rallying for the third consecutive day, gold of 99.5 per cent purity bounced Rs 550 to hit a fresh high of Rs 79,500 per 10g **PHOTO: PTI**

In futures trade, gold contracts for December delivery were trading at Rs 77,620 per 10 gram on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX). During the day, the gold futures touched a lifetime high of Rs 77,667 per 10 gram.

Market experts said the demand for precious metals has strengthened to a record level in the domestic market, with a boost in customer buying during the festival season. Investors are treating the yellow metal as safe haven amid uncertainty due to ongoing tension in the Middle East and upcoming US presidential polls. On MCX, silver contracts for December delivery sprung Rs 1,231 or 1.34 per cent to Rs 92,975 per kg. Globally, Comex gold futures increased 0.76 per cent to USD 2,728.10 per ounce. *—PTI*

'Despite good export, India's trade uncertain'

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Despite signs of recovery in September's export growth, challenges such as container shortages and geopolitical uncertainties continue to pose risks, leaving the outlook for merchandise trade uncertain, according to a report by Crisil.

The widening trade deficit poses a concern, especially with the US imposing higher tariffs on Chinese imports, potentially leading to a surge in Chinese exports to Asian markets, including India.

Nonetheless, a robust services trade and strong remittance inflows are expected to provide some stability, helping to keep the current account in a safe zone.

India's merchandise exports witnessed a modest rebound in September, climbing 0.5 per cent year-on-year to USD 34.6 billion after two consecutive months of decline, including a 9.3 per cent contraction in August.

This improvement was driven by a 9.2 per cent increase in core exports, compared to a 2.4 per cent rise in the previous month. Notable growth was recorded in key sectors such as drugs and pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, organic and inorganic chemicals, and readymade garments.

However, the performance was offset by a 26.8 per cent decline in petroleum product exports, a major export category, which continued to drag down overall export figures.

Sequentially, gems and jewellery exports showed some signs of recovery after a period of weakness. The average price of Brent crude oil in September was USD 74.3 per barrel, significantly lower than the USD 94 average in the same month last year. *—ANI*

Kohli, Rohit & Sarfaraz's 50s take India to 231/3

Virat Kohli crosses 9,000 runs in Test cricket

Rohit Sharma and Sarfaraz Khan

PHOTO: PTI

BENGALURU, 18 OCT

A counter-attacking India kept alive the hopes of a miracle turnaround through free-flowing fifties from the troika of Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, and Sarfaraz Khan, reaching 231 for three in their second innings on the third day of the first Test against New Zealand here on Friday.

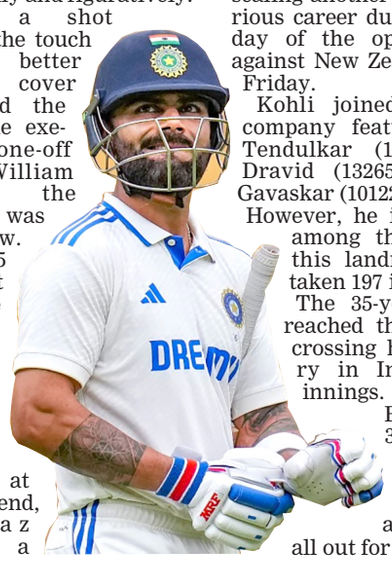
Kohli and Sarfaraz added 136 runs for the third wicket after skipper Rohit did the early running with a fluent 52.

This was after New Zealand posted a total of 402 all out to gain a massive lead of 356 runs thanks to Rachin Ravindra (134) and Tim Southee (63), who added precious 134 runs for a flowing eighth wicket stand. The largest deficit India has overturned to win a Test in their cricketing history is 274 during the iconic Kolkata Test against Australia in 2001.

Such an epic is still some distance away, but hopes will be flickering after the day's effort with the bat.

Amid the more coruscating fifties by Rohit and Sarfaraz, Kohli's effort still stood out for its personal and situational significance. It was his first Test half-century of 2024, and he could not have timed his 31st in the longest format better -- literally and figuratively.

Seldom a shot describes the touch of Kohli better than the cover drive, and the moment he executed one-off pacer William O'Rourke, the 35-year-old was in full flow. He took 15 balls to get off the mark.



Kohli brought up his fifty with a single off Matt Henry but at the other end, Sarfaraz resembled a race car on the tarmac.

Batting maestro **Virat Kohli** became the fourth Indian to cross 9000 runs in Test cricket, scaling another peak in a glorious career during the third day of the opening match against New Zealand here on Friday.

Kohli joined an August company featuring Sachin Tendulkar (15921), Rahul Dravid (13265) and Sunil Gavaskar (10122).

However, he is the slowest among them to reach this landmark, having taken 197 innings.

The 35-year-old Kohli reached the mark after crossing his half-century in India's second innings.

Batting at No. 3, Kohli fell for a nine-ball duck in the first innings as India were all out for 46. —*PTI*

PAKISTAN V ENGLAND

Ali and Sajid dominate in Multan's 2nd Test victory

MULTAN, 18 OCT

Noman Ali and Sajid Khan claimed all 20 wickets on a recycled turning pitch as Pakistan ended a long wait for a home win with a 152-run victory over England in the second test on Friday.

Left-arm spinner Ali took 8-46 to finish with a match haul of 11 wickets and England was bowled out for 144 inside the first session on Day 4 on a tailor-made dry wicket.

Off-spinner Khan took 2-93 to go with his 7-111 in the first innings as both spinners bowled unchanged and ran through the tourists' batting lineup after Pakistan had set up a daunting target of 297 runs.

The win was first for captain Shan Masud, who lost six tests in a row since being elevated as red-ball skipper last year, and also ended Pakistan's winless 11-match home run that included four losses against England.

Captain Ben Stokes, who returned to lead the side after recovering from a torn hamstring, top-scored with 37 before falling bizarrely. Stokes charged down the wicket to Ali, but the bat flew out of the England captain's hand to backward square leg and he was stumped. Brydon Carse smashed three sixes against Khan and scored 27 before he edged Ali in the slips as England couldn't counter the spinners on a wicket that had plenty of cracks and turns.

Pakistan's Noman Ali (seated) celebrates with his teammate after winning the second Test cricket match against England on Friday

PHOTO: PTI

England won the first test by an innings and 47 runs last week after posting a record-breaking 823-7 declared. The series-deciding third test begins at Rawalpindi from next Thursday.

Pakistan 366 (Ghulam 118, Ayub 77, Leach 4-114) and 221 (Salman 63, Bashir 4-66) beat England 291 (Duckett 114, Sajid 7-111) and 144 (Noman 8-46) by 152 runs. —*PTI*

Chelsea, Lyon and Roma stay perfect with victories

WASHINGTON, 18 OCT

Chelsea, Lyon and Roma all stayed perfect in the Women's Champions League by cruising to away victories. Roma routed Galatasaray at Istanbul 6-1, Chelsea beat Twente in the Netherlands 3-1 and eight-time champion Lyon won 2-0 at Wolfsburg. Real Madrid claimed its first victory of the campaign by easing past Celtic 4-0. Roma and Lyon both have six points in Group A. Two-time champion Wolfsburg and Galatasaray, the first Turkish team to reach the group stage, have no points. In Group B, Chelsea leads with six points, with Madrid and Twente on three and Celtic last bottom without a point. Renard strikes on Popp's Wolfsburg striker Alexandra Popp made her 100th competition appearance becoming only the second player to reach the mark but it was Lyon defender Wendie Renard, the only one who has played more, who stole the show. —*AP*

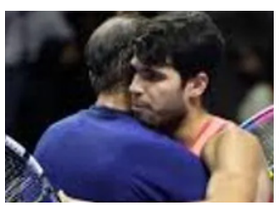


PHOTO: TWITTER

Nadal loses to Alcaraz at Six Kings Slam event

RIYADH, 18 OCT

With an eye on the Davis Cup, Rafael Nadal said he was pleased with his performance despite losing 6-3, 6-3 to Carlos Alcaraz at the Six Kings Slam. Jannik Sinner beat Novak Djokovic 6-2, 6-7 (0), 6-4 in the other semifinal at the exhibition event that awards money but no ATP ranking points and is Saudi Arabia's latest foray into tennis. The match against Alcaraz was Nadal's first since he announced last week that he would be retiring after playing for Spain in the Davis Cup next month.—*PTI*

MotoGP: Rain forces cancellation of practice

SYDNEY, 18 OCT

Opening practice for the Australian MotoGP was canceled Friday because of persistent heavy rain, denying the riders a crucial session on the newly resurfaced Phillip Island circuit. Organizers made the decision almost two hours after it had been due to start with too much water on the track. With four race weekends left, the championship is finely poised with Spanish Pramac star Jorge Martin just 10 points ahead of Italy's Ducati defending champion Francesco Bagnaia. The lack of practice puts more emphasis on the second session, which is due to start at 3:00 pm (0400 GMT).—*AP*

Minjee Lee of Australia shots on the fifth hole during the second round of the LPGA Ladies Championship golf tournament at the Seowon Valley

PHOTO: PTI

Rain suspends play in BMW Ladies C'ship

PAJU, 18 OCT

Rain on Friday washed out much of the second round of the BMW Ladies Championship in South Korea, and none of the players were able to complete their rounds.

Hannah Green of Australia, Ashleigh Buhai of South Africa, and Jenny Shin of South Korea led after Thursday's opening round with scores of 8-under 64 at the Seowon Valley Country Club.

Green continued at the top of the leaderboard and was 4-under after nine holes and 12-under for the tournament before play was suspended. Buhari was two strokes behind at 10-under, also after nine holes.

The second round will completed on Saturday before the start of the third round. Rain is not in the forecast for the rest of the tournament, which is set to wrap up on Sunday.

The field includes eight of the LPGA Tour's top 10 players and 17 of the 18 winners this season.

About the only key player missing is American Nelly Korda who withdrew with a neck injury. —*PTI*

Eshaan qualifies for AEF Cup Final

BENGALURU, 18 OCT

The children (12-14 years) also saw fierce competition, with Eshaan Sundaram qualifies for AEF Cup Final taking first place by riding Pat to a time of 72.06 seconds.

Sundaram narrowly edged out Arnav Navratna, who clocked 73.87 seconds on Long Range, securing second place.

Puneet Jakhar finished third with a time of 77.2 seconds.

Sundaram's win also earned him a place in the AEF Cup Children's Final, to be held in Indonesia.

FEI Concours Saut International 2 (CSI-2) is happening in India for the first time, with the event taking place at the Surge Stable here. TAP KHS

Young Indian rider Kiran Akhade delivered a stellar show to clinch the top honors in the FEI Concours Saut International 2 Equestrian Championship here on Friday.

Riding SRS Newgrange, Akhade clocked an impressive time of 69.36 seconds, finishing more than eight seconds ahead of his closest rival, Saravanan, who rode Mewrick BMG to second place with a time of 77.65 seconds. —*PTI*

Eshaan Sundaram qualifies for AEF Cup taking first place by riding Pat to a time of 72.06 seconds

PHOTO: PTI

Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi during the WR Chess Masters Cup 2024, in London, UK. Erigaisi won the tournament, defeating French Grandmaster Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in the final.

PHOTO: PTI

BHULLAR IN SHARED LEAD IN THAILAND

HUA HIN, 18 OCT

Gaganjeet Bhullar added a second-round of 66 to his opening day's 65 to move into joint lead at the Black Mountain Golf Championship here on Friday.

Bhullar shared the lead with in-form Suteepat Prateeptienchai from Thailand.

China's Liu Yanwei, the joint-first-round leader, returned with a round of 68 to fall back in the leaderboard.

Thailand's Sadom Kaewkanjana (66) and Nitithorn Thippong (68), Englishman Matt Killen (67), Mexico's Santiago De la Fuente (68), plus Australian Kevin Yuan (68) are an additional stroke back – in the fifth event of The International Series season on the Asian Tour. While Bhullar was in the lead, the other Indians to cut were Khalin Joshi (68-66) at tied 13th and Karandeep Kochhar (71-67) at tied 56th. The others, Honey Baisoya, Varun Chopra, Rashid Khan, Chikkarangappa missed the cut. —*PTI*

RANJI TROPHY

Karnataka has its task cut out against Kerala

MULLANPUR, 18 OCT

Karnataka will face a second straight tricky test as it welcomes Kerala for the Ranji Trophy Elite Group-C match which gets underway from Friday at the Alur Grounds near here.

Kerala is coming off a thumping eight-wicket win over Punjab despite conceding the first-innings lead, and it will also be bolstered by the presence of Sanju Samson, fresh after his scintillating 111 in the Hyderabad T20I versus Bangladesh.

Five monsoons ago in Alur, Samson smashed a 129-ball unbeaten 212 in a Vijay Hazare Trophy encounter against Goa. If the 29-year-old can marry those golden memories from the past with his present form, Karnataka will be in for a leather hunt.

Karnataka will bank on Koushik

PHOTO: PTI

The eight-time champion is also coming off a middling effort against Madhya Pradesh in Indore. Though the sides split points equally because of rain and a dodgy outfield, the top-order but for Nikin Jose who scored a plucky 99 did not impress.

Bowlers V. Koushik and V. Vyshak toiled long and hard but did not find adequate support, with Prasidh Krishna sitting out after bowling just eight overs.

Now, with Prasidh in the Indian squad as a traveling reserve and Vidwath Kaverappa out with a shin injury, there is space to fill. There may be a toss-up between seam-bowling all-rounder Vidyadhar Patil and rookie left-armer Abhilash Shetty. —*PTI*

India will face Japan in Sultan of Johor opener

JOHOR, 18 OCT

Two-time Olympic medal-winning stalwart P R Sreejesh will face his first major test as India's new junior men's hockey coach when the under-21 team aims for a fourth title triumph at the 12th Sultan of Johor Cup, beginning with a clash against Japan here on Saturday.

The 36-year-old former goalkeeper, who retired after the bronze-winning campaign in the Paris Olympics earlier this year, took over the reins of the junior group soon after.

India triumphed over Japan in their last encounter at the Junior Asia Cup in May last year, securing a 3-1 victory, and also defeated them 5-1 in the 2022 Sultan of Johor Cup.

P R Sreejesh PHOTO: PTI

"The team has been training well under the new head coach PR Sreejesh and we are excited to play our first tournament with him," captain Amir Ali said in a release.

"After losing to Germany last time, we were unable to retain our crown but this time we are better equipped and ready to take on any team in the competition." —*PTI*

World No. 9 Danielle Collins will not retire

WASHINGTON, 18 OCT

Danielle Collins isn't retiring from tennis after all. She'll be back in 2025.

Danielle Collins says she's changed her mind about retiring from the WTA Tour at the end of this year and will be back in 2025. The 30-year-old American said on her Instagram account Thursday that after dealing with hurricanes in her home state of Florida and seeing specialist doctors about her health issues, she's been "a little MIA (missing in action) the last few weeks." "Dealing with endometriosis and fertility is a massive challenge for many women and something that I am actively traversing, but I am fully confident in the team I am working with. —*AP*

MARCA AMERICA

Messi adds another award to his collection

FORT LAUDERDALE, 18 OCT

Messi became the first recipient of the MARCA America Award, presented by the Spain-based media company. The award recognizes Messi's championship-laden career one with a record 46 trophies won for club or country, and at least 56 other awards on the individual level.

"It has been quite the journey," the Argentine superstar said in Spanish during a moderated question-and-answer session at Chase Stadium, Inter Miami's home field. "We have experienced so many beautiful things but also complicated moments. In 20 years not everything is beautiful. You cannot win all the time."- For Messi, no title outshines the 2022 World Cup with Argentina that helped cement his legacy among the sport's greatest players. However, the 37-year-old Messi has won plenty and still feels the drive to continue adding titles. Similar to his titles with Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain, Messi already has helped Inter Miami win hardware since he joined the MLS club in July 2023.

Inter Miami star Lionel Messi

Although limited to 18 MLS matches this season because of an ankle injury and national team commitments, Messi has 17 goals and 15 assists to help lead Miami to the 2024 Supporters Shield.

Miami will have home-field advantage throughout the MLS Cup playoffs which begin next week."I was able to achieve the biggest prize, which is the World Cup," said Messi, who had three goals and two assists in a 6-0 Argentina romp past Bolivia in a World Cup qualifier on Tuesday.

"It is the trophy all of us want when we start playing and I managed to fulfill my dream. We won many titles in Barcelona and Paris.

Now we are here to fight hard for another title."Messi's contract with Inter Miami runs through next season. And, after his recent goal-scoring performance on Tuesday, Messi could remain energized in his commitments with Argentina through the next World Cup cycle.

"I still have a deep love for this sport and I will continue to aspire to win more titles," Messi said. "At this level, you have to enjoy things day by day."Inter Miami has one regular-season match left, coming at home Saturday against New England. If Inter Miami wins it would set the MLS single-season points mark with 72, one more than New England had in 2021. —*PTI*

Sports Bill will hurt autonomy: PT Usha

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Indian Olympic Association President PT Usha has raised concerns about some provisions of the Draft National Sports Governance Bill, saying a regulatory authority proposed by it will undermine the autonomy of the IOA and national federations, putting the country at risk of an international suspension.

In a letter to Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, Usha also stated that the bill does not provide clarity on the role of State Olympic Associations (SOAs), thereby undermining the process of decentralizing sports governance.

Her larger concern is, however, the autonomy of the IOA and the National Sports Federations (NSFs) if a Sports Regulatory Board of India, which would oversee their functioning, becomes operational as proposed by the bill.

"While this may strengthen governance and prevent administrative issues such as corruption or mismanagement, it raises concerns about the autonomy of sports bodies, particularly the IOA, NSFs, and SOAs," she said. The sprint legend claimed that the regulatory authority has been granted extensive powers to control the functioning of the IOA and NSFs. —*PTI*

IOA President PT Usha